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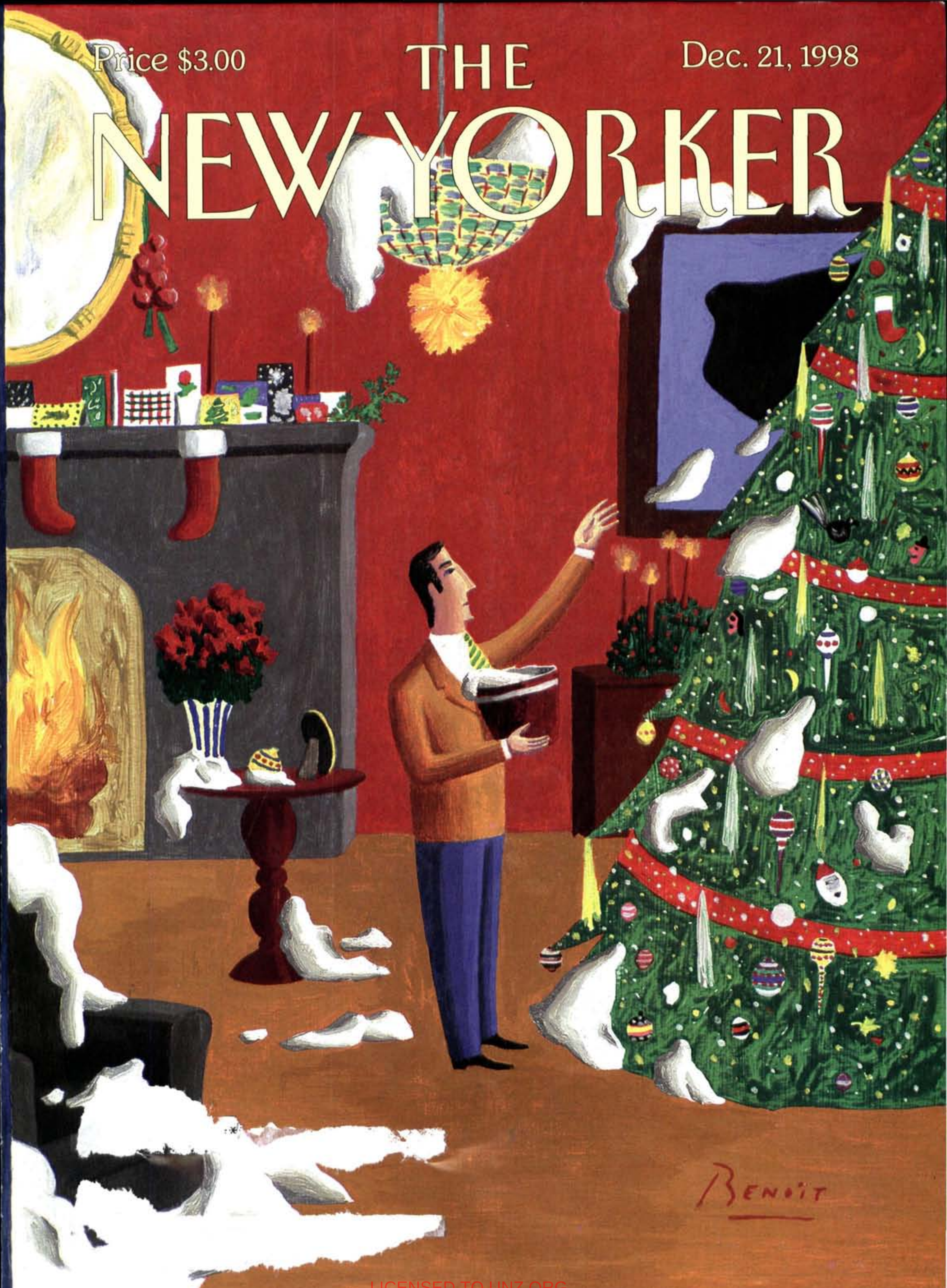
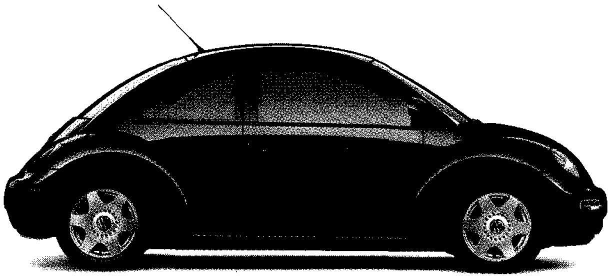
# THE NEW YORKER

Dec. 21, 1998





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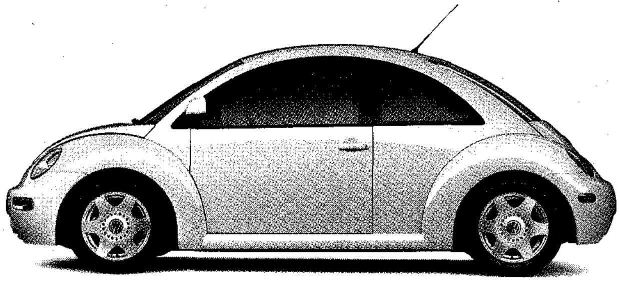
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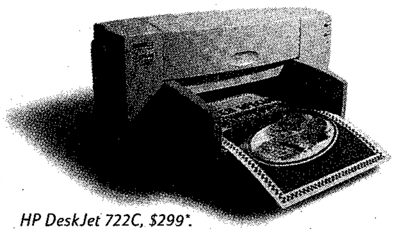

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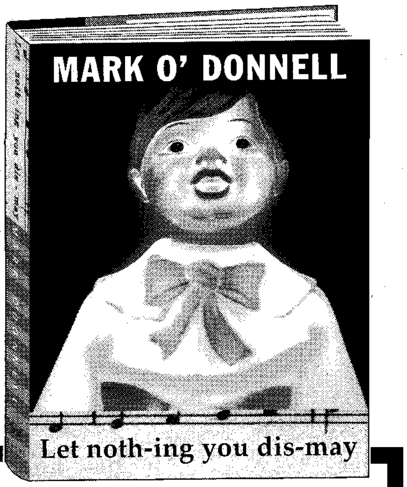

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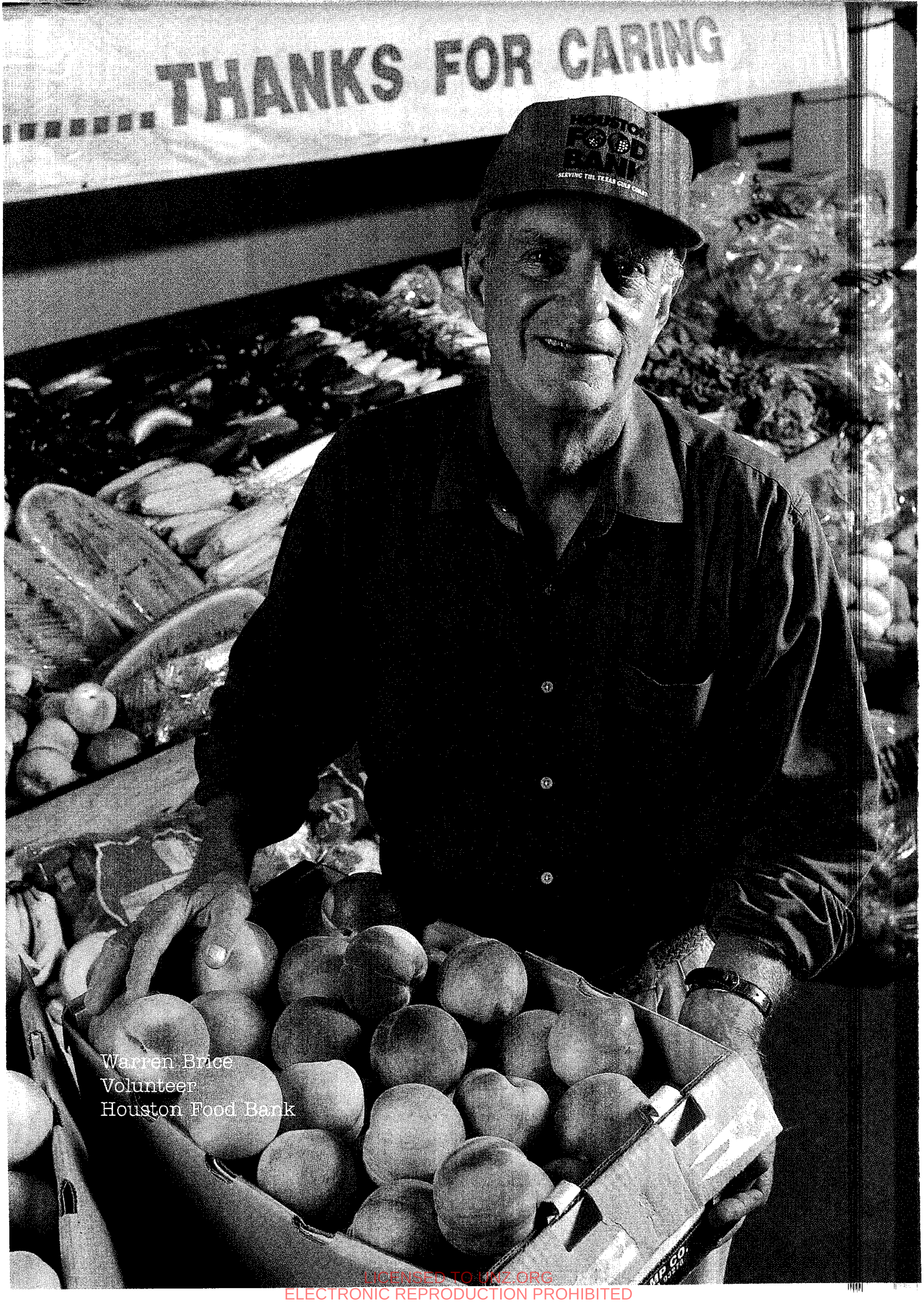
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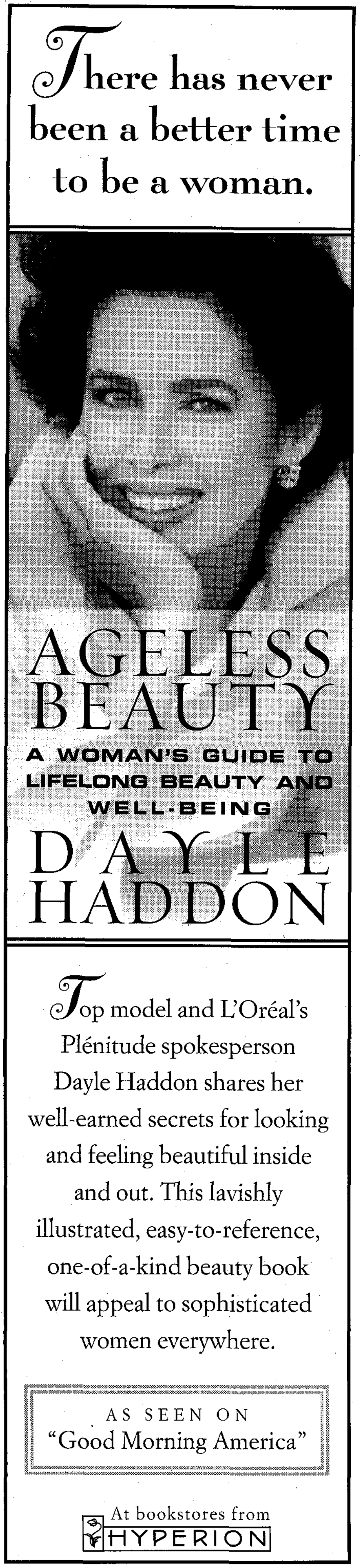

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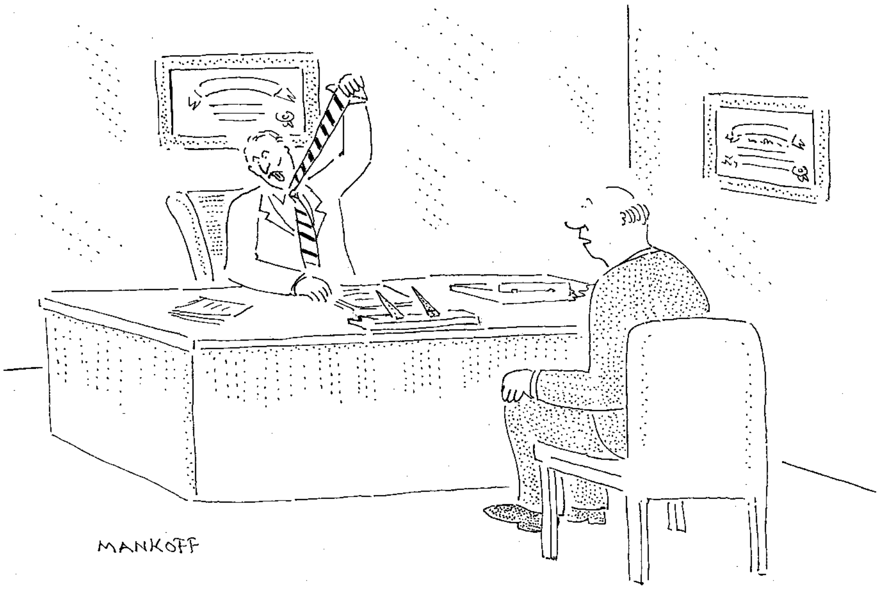

*"Thanks a lot, Dr. Kevorkian, but I think I'd like a second opinion."*

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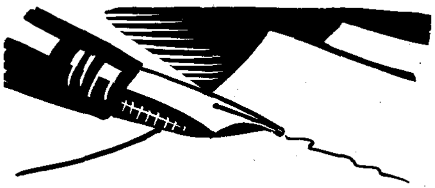

## NEW AGE POLITICS

It's nice to think of installing someone in the Oval Office who can talk for an hour about his intellectual convictions, but the responses elicited by Louis Menand's interview with Al Gore ("After Elvis," October 26th & November 2nd) mainly illustrate the failure of New Age thought to escape the long shadow of postmodernism. Blaming Cartesian rationalism for man's rape of nature, for example, is a perverse substitution of abstruse aesthetic problems for obvious material ones. Concentrated human populations have always exerted stress on their environments; archeologists can correlate the decline of many ancient civilizations with the degradation of their natural resources. While technology has lately intensified the stress on our own environment, it also offers remedies and alternatives—and the immediate reasons they haven't been more widely embraced are not metaphysical or spiritual but economic and political. We should hope that a commitment to small government wouldn't prevent Gore, if elected President, from proposing a more effective environmental-policy initiative than "living in one's body as a fully integrated physical and mental being."

ERIC R. MEYER
Boulder, Colo.

## THE STATE OF SOUL

In his article on soul music ("No Respect," October 26th & November 2nd), Hilton Als criticizes white kids for trying to experience "the real" in the nineteen-seventies by listening to black music of ten years earlier (such as James Brown and the Supremes), while he and the rest of the black youth of America were listening to black music of the era (Chic and Labelle). He then moves on to criticize white kids for listening to Lauryn Hill today, because Hill tries to project an image of inner-city persecution even though she is in fact "a child of the middle class." But Hill is also a modern black musician, and one of the major recording artists that black youth are now listening to. Moreover, in rejecting Beck and other white musicians who try to become hip by "ripping off" James Brown, Als implies that white musicians who are directly influenced by black culture or music are betraying both themselves and black culture. Does this also imply that it's wrong for a black person to play European classical music? For an American to play traditional Irish music? Als says that he envisions color-free soul, but his article has reinstated the color line.

SAM AMIDON
Brattleboro, Vt.

I remember, in the seventies, managing a store that sold new and used records. During the first few weeks of its release, whatever new soul LP was hot—Funkadelic, Curtis Mayfield, Labelle, Earth, Wind & Fire—would be purchased in great numbers by my black customers and ignored by whites. About two months later, these same albums would be traded in, well-used; local whites would then belatedly pick up on those sounds, and continue to buy albums by those artists for years. I've never been able to decide which group supported the music and the artists more effectively.

MARK LEVITON
Granada Hills, Calif.

## ENVIRONMENTAL GOURMET

Alice Waters advocates the use of local produce, and serves it at her restaurant Chez Panisse (as Adam Gopnik explains in "The Millennial Restaurant," October 26th & November 2nd). The produce may not have to travel far, but many of the jet-setting foodie pilgrims who eat there do. Surely, for the planet's sake, it makes a lot more sense to ship the tomato to the patron than the other way around.

BEPPI CROSARIOL
Toronto, Canada

•

*Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They can also be faxed to 212-840-8489 or sent via E-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.*

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| 20 | 21 | 22 |  |  |  |  |

## THE THEATRE

### OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

*(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)*

**The Captain's Tiger**—An autobiographical play, set on a steamer bound for Asian ports, by the South African playwright Athol Fugard, who leads the cast. Previews begin Dec. 17. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

**A Couple of Blaguards**—An autobiographical two-man show, written by Frank McCourt and his brother Malachy and performed by Shay Duffin and Mickey Kelly. In previews. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

**Far East**—An American military officer (Michael Hayden) is caught in a triangle involving his commander's wife, in a drama by A. R. Gurney, set during the Korean War. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

**Freedomland**—Amy Freed's new comedy, about a dysfunctional family, stars Veanne Cox as an artist who paints hobo clowns. Howard Shalwitz is the director. Opens Dec. 16 at 7:30. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

**Parade**—The story of Leo Frank, a Northerner wrongly convicted of murdering a child in the South in 1913, is the basis of a musical by Alfred Uhry (book) and Jason Robert Brown (music and lyrics). Directed by Harold Prince. Two previews on Dec. 16. Opens Dec. 17 at 6:30. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

**Some Voices**—The British playwright Joe Penhall's comedy-drama about a restaurant owner who takes in his schizophrenic brother, presented by the New Group. Previews begin Dec. 21. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

### OPENED RECENTLY

**All Under Heaven**—Valerie Harper portrays Pearl Buck in a drama about the author's life, co-written by Ms. Harper and Dyke Garrison. (Century Theatre, 111 W. 15th St. 239-6200.)

**August Snow** and **Night Dance**—Repertory stagings of two plays—one set in 1937, the other in 1945—about a North Carolina family, by the novelist Reynolds Price. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231. Closes Jan. 10.)

**The Blue Room**—Nicole Kidman and Iain Glen portray five characters each in David Hare's adaptation of Schnitzler's "La Ronde," a series of linked seduction scenes. Directed by Sam Mendes. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

**Bosoms and Neglect**—The second offering in the Signature Theatre Company's John Guare season is the playwright's 1979 black comedy. Mary Louise Wilson leads the cast. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529. Closes Jan. 10.)

**Chère Maître**—A "recital" of correspondence between Gustave Flaubert and George Sand, performed by Peter Eyre and Irene Worth. The excerpts, chosen by Mr. Eyre, avoid a common flaw of compilations; rather than focussing on events surrounding the authors' greatest hits, the letters present quotidian details and literary theorizing, which illuminate both writers' lives and art. In many ways, Flaubert and Sand could not have been more different, but the affection and respect evident in the letters is brought to life by Mr. Eyre's understated performance and by Miss Worth's radiant vigor. A graceful, moving evening. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051. Closes Dec. 20.)

**Collected Stories**—Despite a splendid performance by Uta Hagen, as an aging writer who tells her protégée the one story about her own life which she hasn't written, this revival of Donald Margulies's 1997 drama only points out how poorly constructed the relationship between the two women is. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

**Communicating Doors**—A wonderful farce with a fairy-tale ending, by Alan Ayckbourn. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 13th St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 3.)

**Duet! A Romantic Fable**—The Adobe Theatre Company's amiable spoof of all things fifties, from lounge acts to monster movies to overwrought dream sequences. The cast is charming, and the direction is not overwhelming—a big step in the right direction for Adobe. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 239-6200.)

**Eight!**—A one-man musical portrait of Henry VIII, written by and starring Steeve Arlen. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 279-4200. Closes Dec. 20.)

**Electra**—Zoë Wanamaker has the title role in a Donmar Warehouse/McCarter Theatre production of Sophocles' tragedy. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

**The Extra Man**—Richard Greenburg's 1992 drama about a writer who engineers an affair between two friends. Glynnis O'Connor is in the cast. (Samuel Beckett, 412 W. 42nd St. 414-5473. Closes Dec. 20.)

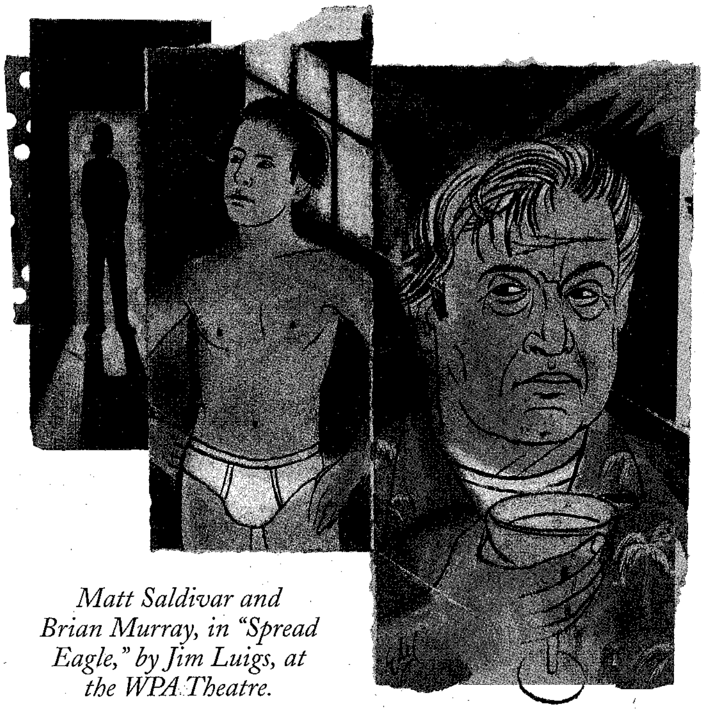
**Fool Moon**—Clowning and music with Bill Irwin, David Shiner, and the Red Clay Ramblers, who return to Broadway for a limited engagement of their 1993 show. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100. Closes Jan. 1.)

**Footloose**—A musical adaptation of the 1984 film, co-written by Dean Pitchford (who also wrote the screenplay) and Walter Bobbie. With music by Tom Snow and lyrics by Mr. Pitchford. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

**"Hope" Is the Thing with Feathers**—Maria Tucci leads the cast in a new play by Frank Pugliese, about the loss of faith of three disparate couples. Randolph Curtis Rand is the director. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 242-4770. Closes Dec. 19.)

**Impossible Marriage**—Beth Henley's new drama, set in Savannah, about a young woman's marriage to a philandering older man. Stephen Wadsworth is the director. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300. Closes Jan. 1.)

**I'm Still Here . . . Damn It!**—If you're not ambivalent about Sandra Bernhard's new show, you may have missed the point: she's spent her career keeping us guessing about her motives and sincerity, and it's still interestingly hard to tell where the commentary on celebrity narcissism ends and the narcissistic celebrity begins. What stands out in this show, Bernhard's first on Broadway, is her mastery of the emotional hairpin turns in



*Matt Saldivar and Brian Murray, in "Spread Eagle," by Jim Luigs, at the WPA Theatre.*

TOP: DUPUY-BERBERIAN; BOTTOM: EDEL RODRIGUEZ

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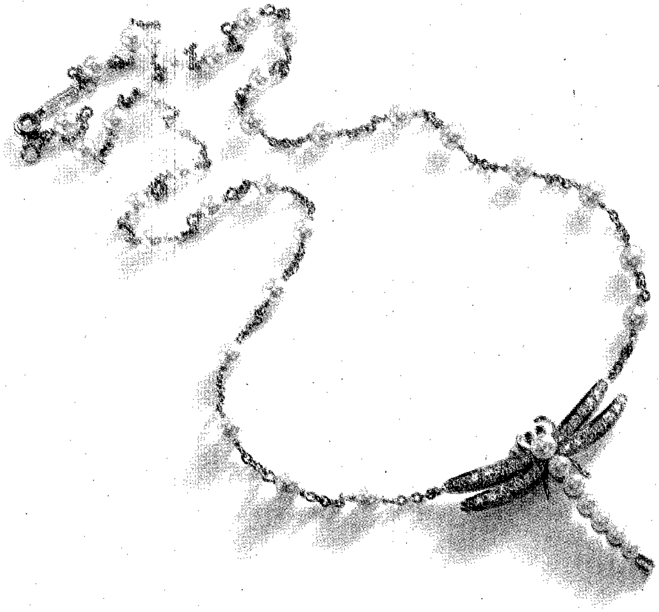

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her material—a tender moment can become a hilarious monster-diva moment in seconds—and her terrific, strong singing voice. What more can you ask for? (Reviewed in our issue of 11/16/98.) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**KILLER JOE**—In Tracy Letts's graphic dark comedy, an American family striving for a better life—in this case, a bunch of losers living in a trailer outside Dallas—hires a hit man to help things along. Though the experience sometimes feels like being trapped in Sam Shepard's claustrophobic Nowheresville while being smacked around by Quentin Tarantino, the terrific production is so vividly unself-conscious that you hardly feel assaulted at all—in fact, you enjoy it. Scott Glenn and Amanda Plummer are billed as the stars, but the whole cast is excellent. Wilson Milam is the director. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

**LITTLE ME**—Martin Short carries this musical-comedy relic on his cute little shoulders with ease. But the show—a spoof of celebrity rags-to-riches stories, which originally starred Sid Caesar, in 1962, in multiple roles—*is* a relic, so audience members not madly in love with Short (who are these people?) may find themselves scratching their heads, wondering how the innocent/ribald silliness ever inspired more than minor laughs. The rest of the cast is pretty much generic, with the exception of the wonderful Faith Prince, and unfortunately she's miscast. Written by Neil Simon (book), Cy Coleman (music), and Carolyn Leigh (lyrics). Direction and choreography are by Rob Marshall. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

**MERCY**—Laura Cahill's drama centers on the lives of four young Manhattanites. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. Closes Jan. 3.)

**THE MOST FABULOUS STORY EVER TOLD**—A fresh version of a very old tale, by Paul Rudnick. Joanna Adler, Lisa Kron, Amy Sedaris, and Alan Tudyk are in the cast. Directed by Christopher Ashley. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

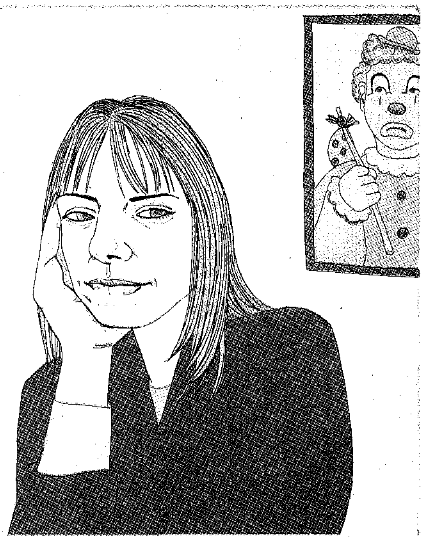
**THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP**—It's not difficult to imagine what made this farce a hit back in 1984: the play's author and original star, the immensely gifted Charles Ludlam, who died in 1987 of complications due to AIDS. As staged and performed by that production's co-star, Everett Quinton, this version ends up a bore, despite its fairly outré conceit—"Rebecca" meets Agatha Christie meets pure camp. Drag has been out of the closet for a long time now; this is an artifact of a more innocent time. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

**THE OLD SETTLER**—Leslie Uggams and Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr., portray a pair of mismatched lovers in 1943 Harlem. The play, written by John Henry Redwood, has fine characterizations and delightful jokes, but the structure is predictably melodramatic, and Mr. Redwood tosses in so many details about the neighborhood and the times that he occasionally leaves his actors stranded in a morass of facts. Nevertheless, the whole cast (which includes Lynda Gravátt and Rosalyn Coleman), under the strong direction of Harold Scott, overcomes it all. And the pairing of Ms. Uggams' deft radiance with Mr. Simmons' eager charm is a pleasure to see. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

**ON THE TOWN**—The New York Shakespeare Festival's revival of the 1944 Comden and Green classic makes its move to Broadway. George C. Wolfe is the director. (12/7 & 12/14/98) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

**OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS**—In Joe DiPietro's new comedy, a young man planning his future clashes with his four Italian-American grandparents. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

**PETER PAN**—Kathy Rigby may not be as enchanting as Mary Martin was in the title role, but how many ten-year-olds care? To kids, this well-worn but highly satisfying staging has all the elements of great theatre that it needs—Indians, pirates, a fairy, a crocodile, magic dust—and if you can find a more daring flier than Rigby, it's your patriotic duty to notify the United States Air Force. Paul Schoeffler is especially fun as Captain Hook. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. Closes Jan. 3.)



LARA TOMLIN

**VICIOUS WIT:** *The playwright Amy Freed brooks no kooks. In her 1995 comedy, "The Psychic Life of Savages," she hilariously reimagined the neurotic behavior of such self-absorbed poets as Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes, and Robert Lowell, each in thin disguise. (Anne to Sylvia, her new roomie in a mental institution: "Got a fella?" Sylvia: "Flesh disgusts me.") Edgar Allan Poe and Emily Dickinson have also been scorched by her satire. So it seems only natural that Freed would one day dissect the contemporary dysfunctional family, the source of more than a few flaky artistic geniuses. In her latest dark comedy, "Freedomland," which opens December 16th at Playwrights Horizons, an ex-hippie professor plays reluctant host to his artist daughter (a successful painter whose exclusive subject is hobo clowns), his anti-government, bomb-making son, and his feckless graduate-student daughter. Imagine "You Can't Take It with You," Kaufman and Hart's paean to eccentricity, rewritten by Dorothy Parker, and you'll come close to Freed's brand of harsh pathos.*

**SAKINA'S RESTAURANT**—Aasif Mandvi plays six characters in his one-man exploration of the South Asian community in New York. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

**THE SHAUGHRAUN**—The nineteenth-century playwright Dion Boucicault's melodrama, staged by the Irish Repertory Theatre. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Jan. 3.)

**SIDE MAN**—Warren Leight's astute, elegiac play is a young man's bittersweet homage to his crazy, warring parents and to the mysteries of the jazz life that divided them. The father (played by Frank Wood with superb passive-aggressive vacancy), a big-band trumpet player, speaks articulately in his art but is a kind of zombie at home, which bewilders his son (a charming, laid-back Christian Slater) and drives his wife (Wendy Makkena) to drink. The son serves as a biographer of sorts, whose combined detachment from and involvement in the family is mirrored by the director Michael Mayer's expert staging, as he moves in and out of remembered scenes, alternately commenting on and participating in their chaos. (11/23/98) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**SNAKEBIT**—A drama by the actor and first-time playwright David Marshall Grant, staged by Naked Angels. (Grove Street Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 479-7304. Closes Dec. 20.)

**SPALDING GRAY**—The monologuist returns to P.S. 122 with a work in progress. Dec. 21 at 8. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

**SPREAD EAGLE**—Brian Murray portrays an acclaimed British actor who leaves the stage for a life in Mexico, in a dark comedy by Jim Luigs. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes Jan. 1.)

**STOP KISS**—Diana Son's comedy-drama takes place in the aftermath of a kiss between two women. Jo Bonney is the director. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

**SWAN LAKE**—The British choreographer Matthew Bourne's thrilling, iconoclastic version of the Tchaikovsky ballet takes the story of the troubled Prince who falls in love with a swan out of the realm of the folkloric and into the realm of Freudian nightmare, where obsession substitutes for enchantment. The simple but profound exchange of male for female swans sweeps away in one stroke the hidebound froufrou of the traditional version and releases enormous energy into the music. (10/19/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

**SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE**—Abstract puppets underwater, set to the music of Berlioz. A peerless, delightful evening. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

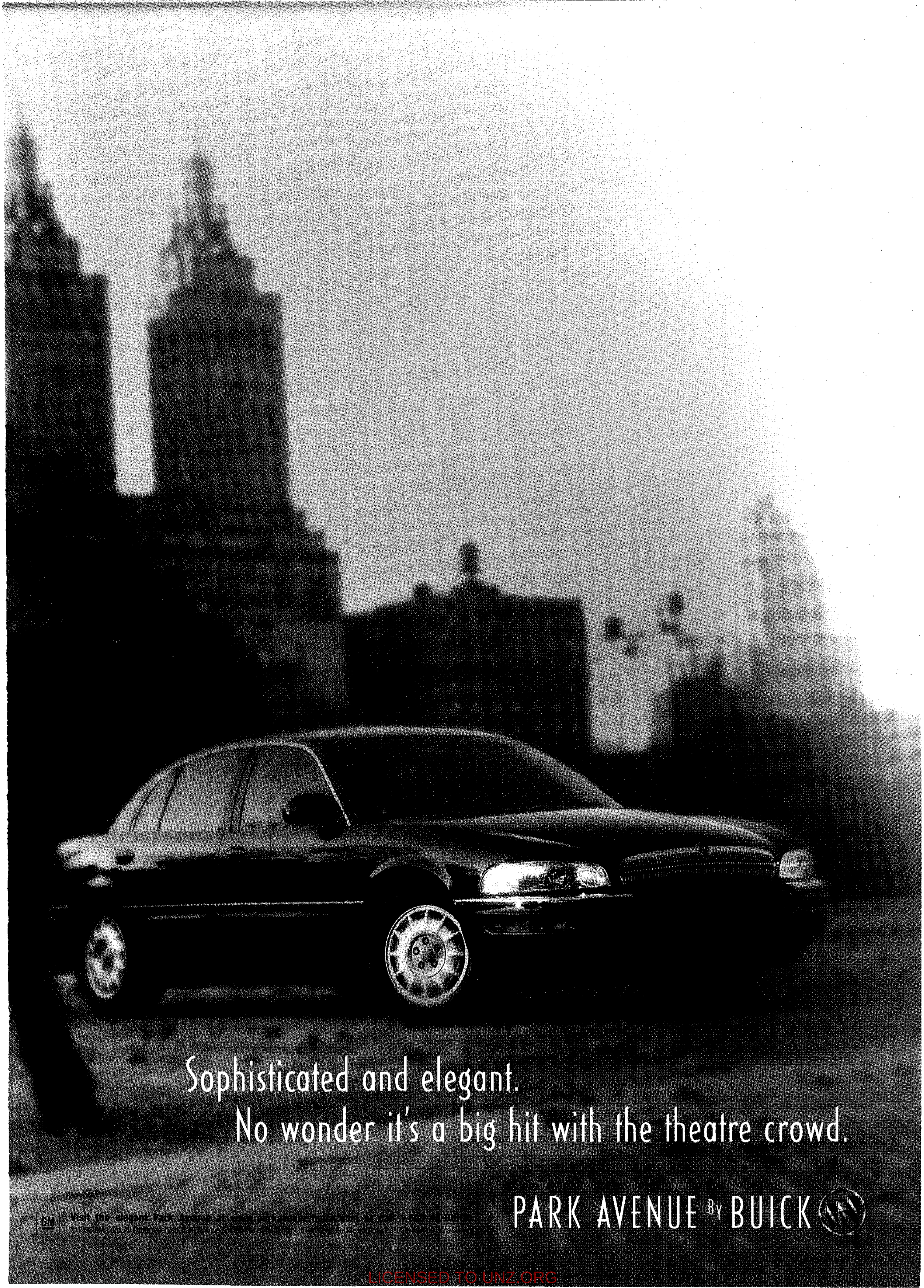
**THIS IS OUR YOUTH**—Kenneth Lonergan's highly praised comedy about postadolescent heartbreak, set on the Upper West Side in 1982. His characters are meant to be the by-products of a morally bankrupt culture: they have money, they have a certain raggedy charm, and they can muster a kind of vocabulary. What they don't have in life is a reason to be; what they don't have onstage is a way of compelling our attention. Lonergan, whose script shows real theatrical promise, is good on surface behavior but not on subtext. Everything that is psychologically important happens offstage. Mark Brokaw is the director. (11/23/98) (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 787-3392. Closes Jan. 3.)

**WAITING FOR GODOT**—Christopher Lloyd, Tony Shalhoub, John Turturro, and Richard Spore take on Beckett's tragicomedy. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

**WIT**—Margaret Edson's funny, diamond-sharp first play manages to yoke together Donne's "Holy Sonnets" and ovarian cancer to make an original drama about the dignity of the spirit and the failure of modern medicine. Kathleen Chalfant, as the feisty English professor with only two hours to live and so many acid jokes to tell, gives one helluva fine performance. (MCC Theatre, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. The play closes here Dec. 13. It moves to the Union Square Theatre on Dec. 18.)

## LONG RUNS

**ART:** Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. (Closes Jan. 3.) . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th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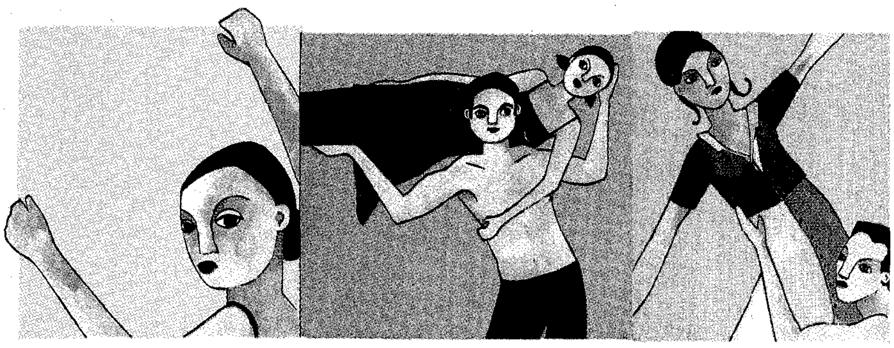
St. 239-6200.... **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.... **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.... **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.... **DINAH WAS:** Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.... **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.... **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.... **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.... **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.... **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.... **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.... **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.... **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.... **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.... **NUNSENSE A-MEN:** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.... **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.... **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.... **POWER PLAYS:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.... **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.... **R & J:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.... **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.... **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.... **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200.... **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.... **THE SOUND OF MUSIC:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.... **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477.... **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.... **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.... **VISITING MR. GREEN:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.



*Susan Marshall & Company in "The Most Dangerous Room in the House," at BAM.*

# DANCE

**NEW YORK CITY BALLET**—The company promises surprise appearances by former N.Y.C.B. greats scattered like sugarplums throughout its run of "The Nutcracker." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Dec. 16-17 and Dec. 22 at 6, Dec. 18 at 8, Dec. 19 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 20 at 1 and 5. Through Jan. 3.)

**ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATRE**—Dec. 16 at 8: "The River," "Masakela Langage," and "Revelations."... ¶ Dec. 17 at 8: A medley of Ailey classics.... ¶ Dec. 18 at 8: "Hymn," "Masakela Langage," and "Revelations."... ¶ Dec. 19 at 2: "The Stack-Up," "Bad Blood," and "Suite Otis."... ¶ Dec. 19 at 8: A medley of Ailey classics.... ¶ Dec. 20 at 3: "The River," "Polish Pieces," and "Slaves."... ¶ Dec. 20 at 7:30: "Streams," "Cry," "Masakela Langage," and "Revelations."... ¶ Dec. 22 at 8: "Lettres d'Amour," "Echo: Far from Home," and "The Prodigal Prince." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Through Jan. 3.)

**"THE MOST DANGEROUS ROOM IN THE HOUSE"**—Susan Marshall & Company's latest piece confronts the issues of control and fear which pervade our lives. "In choosing the title for the work," Marshall says, "I was drawn to the utterly domestic nature of it, to its statement that all around there are things to fear." Marshall is also a new mother. "You're vigilant. You try to do all the right things. How do you protect the people you love?" The evening-length work for her company of eight has a simple set—two large moving panels that form walls and a raked platform. Pared-down duets and trios emerge and create discrete worlds, only to be swept away by lush crossing phrases by the rest of the group; this rhythm of alternating intensity and relief becomes a meditation on the quiet victories and sadnesses of life. The piece makes its points gently, allowing you to inhabit it in your own way. With a score by David Lang (performed live by the Bang on a Can All-Stars) and text by Christopher Renino. (BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Dec. 16-19 at 7:30 and Dec. 20 at 3.)

**"NOT GARDEN"**—The choreographer Stephen Petronio presents his first full-length work for his eight-member company. Inspired by Dante's "Inferno," the seventy-five-minute piece incorporates references to twentieth-century sinners (press material mentions Hitler and Madonna), set to the music of David Linton and Sheila Chandra. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Dec. 15-19 at 8 and Dec. 20 at 2 and 7:30.)

**"SILVER SERIES: VOLUME ONE"**—Danspace Project opens a series celebrating its silver anniversary with performances by Ishmael Houston-Jones, Mary Overlie, and Wendy Perron, followed by one-night-only appearances by David Dorfman (Dec. 18), Bill T. Jones (Dec. 19), and Jennifer Monson (Dec. 20). (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. All shows at 8:30.)

**"RE: SISTERS"**—The six-member Wendy Osserman Dance Company reprises a work about sororal relationships, amplified in the current version with sisterly stories that audience members told the cast following the première in June. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Dec. 17-19 at 8 and Dec. 20 at 3.)

**"MESSIAH"**—The eight women of the Rosa Mei Dance troupe blend the sacred and profane, using the Handel oratorio as the score for choreography inspired by the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch. (Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 924-0077. Dec. 19 at 8 and Dec. 20 at 3 and 8.)

**NEW YORK THEATRE BALLET**—Uncle Drosselmeyer explains the intricacies of "The Nutcracker" directly to the young audience, who mingle with the dancers in this hour-long version of the holiday classic. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Dec. 18 at 3:30 and 6 and Dec. 19-20 at 1 and 3:30. Through Dec. 27.)

**"FETISH"**—The choreographer Megan Brazil uses acrobatics, ballroom dance, and the deadlifting of male company members in a muscular exploration of sexual roles. (Marymount Manhattan Theatre, 221 E. 71st St. 924-0077. Dec. 17-18 at 8 and Dec. 19 at 2 and 8.)

# NIGHT LIFE

## CONCERTS

**"JINGLE BALL"**—A holiday benefit concert, with a Santa's-list lineup that includes the rockers Goo Goo Dolls, the Canadian quintet Barenaked Ladies, and country-music star Shania Twain. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Dec. 17 at 7.)

**LOUIE BELLSON AND HIS BIG BAND**—With his double bass drums thumping and his hundred-volt exuberance charging the bandstand, Bellson may be the last big-band leader to remember the days when musicianship went hand in hand with showmanship. He still looks and sounds great and informs his ensembles with invaluable knowledge learned firsthand from his old employer, Duke Ellington. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Dec. 17 at 8.)

**THE SHIRLEY HORN TRIO AND THE LINCOLN CENTER JAZZ ORCHESTRA**—This oh-so-subtle stylist uses her whisper of a voice, velvety piano runs, and a proclivity for glacial tempos to uncover the expressive niches of a song. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Dec. 17 and Dec. 19 at 8.)

**HOWARD JOHNSON AND GRAVITY**—The jazz tuba's best friend and his longtime band. (Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9491. Dec. 18 at 5:30.)

**BILLY JOEL**—He's never mythologized New York the way Bruce Springsteen turned New Jersey into his own Yoknahpatawpha County, but Joel has always been a hometown boy. His local gigs have a prodigal-son intensity. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Dec. 18, Dec. 20, and Dec. 22, all at 8.)

**THE JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION**—The band that tries to reimagine Elvis Presley as a post-ironic punk with a degree from Dartmouth. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Dec. 19 at 7:30.)

**NATALIE MERCHANT**—She whirls, she mewls, she does everything but swing a shawl: the Clinton Administration's answer to Stevie Nicks. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Dec. 19-20 at 8.)

## CLUBS

*(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)*

**BOTTOM LINE,** 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Dec. 18: Texas songwriter **RICHARD BARONE** leads an abridged choral version of Handel's "Messiah," with downtown guitarist **GARY LUCAS** assisting and radio disk jockey **VIN SCELSA** ("Idiot's Delight") providing the narration. Dec. 19: More seasonal glee, with former Styx guitarist **GLEN BURTNIK** and a load of his friends—**MARSHALL CRENSHAW, FREEDY JOHNSTON, JOHN S. HALL,** and others—singing holiday tunes.

**BOWERY BALLROOM,** 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Dec. 17-19: The **AFGHAN WHIGS.** After they were dropped last year by Elektra Records (eleven years into their career), this Cincinnati-based, white-boy funk collective, led by songwriter and vocalist Greg Dulli, now scores some sweet revenge by releasing a very fine new disk, "1965," on Columbia Records. The band still doesn't move many units, but it does move backsides. "1965" continues to perfect the Whigs' careful distillation of gilded atmospherics and Isaac Hayes-era retro funk, a sound best exemplified by the group's excellent 1996 album, "Black Love." Dec. 21: Gloom rocker **LLOYD COLE** performs with the **NEGATIVES.** Dec. 22: Rapper, sampler, and sometime *Paper* columnist **DJ SPOOKY** is in the house.

**CHEZ ES SAADA,** 42 E. 1st St. (777-5617)—On the ground floor of the old technical school here is a pretty café; traipse through and you reach the top of an improbably grand tiled staircase; descend and you find a basement transformed by scattered rose petals

TRISHA KRAUSS

and golden light into the secret Tangier of Burroughs and Bowles. Waitresses in gold Badgley Mischka uniforms serve North African-flavored bistro fare, and d.j.s play everything from nineteen-fifties Egyptian 45s to up-to-the-minute Moroccan chaiba dance music. But the greatest pleasure is the elegant "retiring room," where you can slouch on a hassock and sip a vintage cocktail.

**KNITTING FACTORY,** 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Dec. 17: **LOTION,** the band best known for having Thomas Pynchon as a friend and advocate (he wrote the liner notes on one of the band's albums), preaches to the converted.

**LIFE,** 158 Bleecker St. (420-1999)—Dec. 16: Rock legend **RONNIE SPECTOR** holds her very own Christmas spectacular, with former punk turned Santa **JOEY RAMONE** and other special guests.

**MAXWELL'S,** 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Dec. 18: **MARTIN SEXTON.** This thirty-two-year-old folk rocker from Syracuse once spent eight hundred dollars to cut his first album. Seven years and one independent release later, he's just made "The American," his major-label début. Though a bigger budget certainly hasn't harmed Sexton's oaky voice and sharp-edged songwriting, to really experience one of the decade's best storytellers you have to shell out a cover charge; his live shows, after all, are what got him this far. Dec. 20: **ALEX CHILTON,** the man from Memphis who (as a high-school sophomore) put the gravel into the Box Tops' classic, "The Letter." Over the past three decades, he's been the leader of Big Star, producer for the Cramps, a dishwasher, and the subject of a Replacements song; these days, he seems content to cut records that showcase his sardonic approach to blues, rockabilly, country, and R. & B.

**MERCURY LOUNGE,** 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Dec. 18: **FIVE CHINESE BROTHERS** formed more than a decade ago at Columbia University and have since become local heroes and one of smart pop's great journeyman acts. With the underground country of **ROBBIE FULKS.**

**TRAMPS,** 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Dec. 20: An evening of washboards, two-stepping, and southwestern-Louisiana hospitality, with the **CREOLE ZYDECO FARMERS.**

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

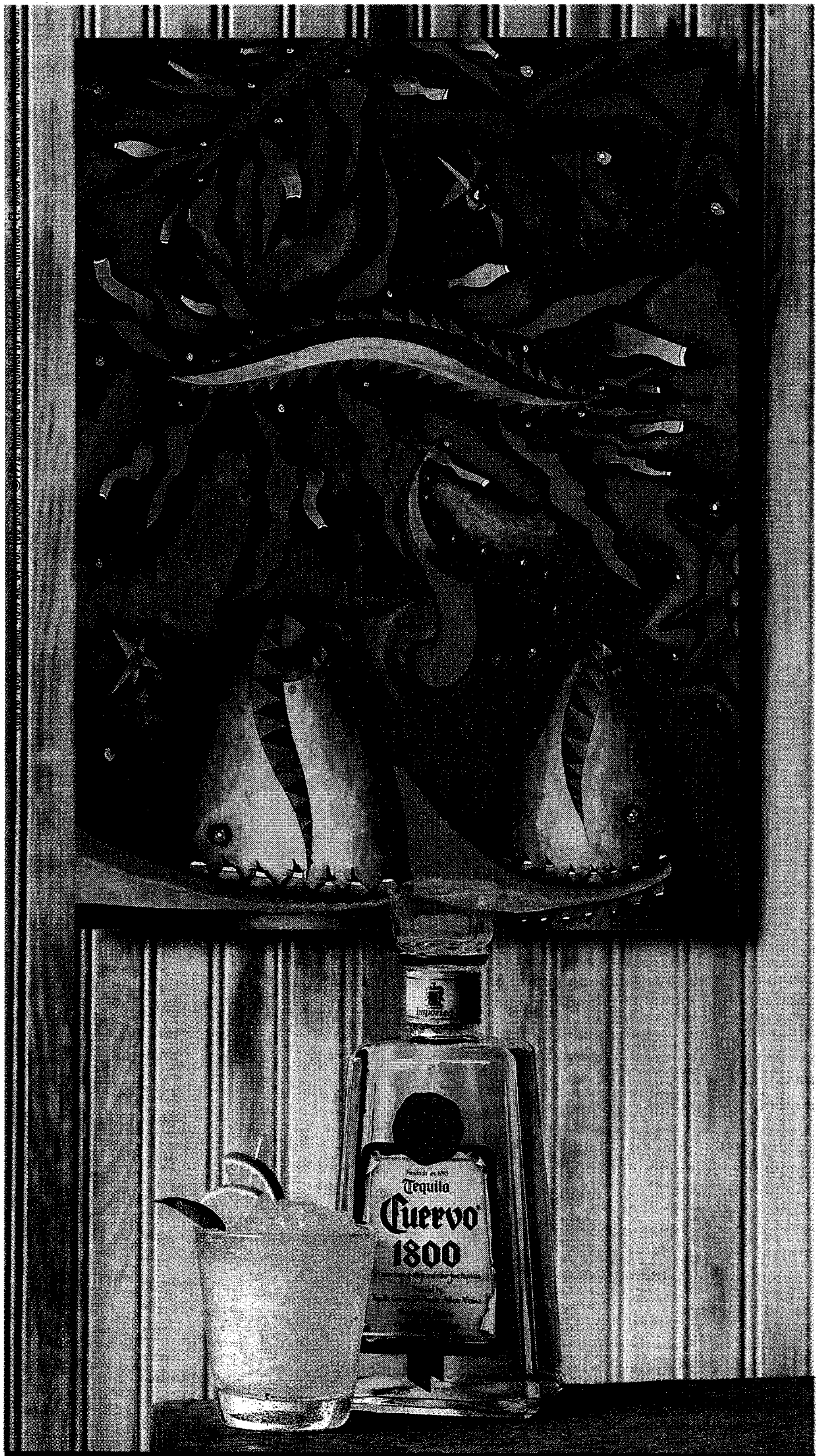
**BIRDLAND,** 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Dec. 16-19: How do you get the prodigious pianist **MONTY ALEXANDER** to calm down a bit? Have him present a Nat King Cole tribute. Alexander puts on a loving and relaxed celebration of the great crooner and, lest anyone forget, jazz pianist. His special guest will be **HARRY (SWEETS) EDISON,** the former Basie-band trumpet star who can stuff a lifetime of jazz knowledge into one meagre note. Dining.

**BLUE NOTE,** 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Dec. 20: The **MILT JACKSON** quartet. The agility, grace, elemental vigor, and soulful lyricism of vibraphonist Jackson is just as much on display when he leads his own band as it is in his berth in the Modern Jazz Quartet. Jackson is one of music's most important and satisfying improvisers; his solos celebrate the art of jazz. Dining.

**CARLYLE HOTEL,** Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through the New Year, the inimitable **BOBBY SHORT.** . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** is in attendance.

**DELMONICO LOUNGE,** Park Ave. at 59th St. (486-0508)—Dec. 18-19: **CHICO FREEMAN,** a multi-instrumentalist who concentrates on the tenor sax, is making a very graceful transition from youthful avant-gardist to middle-aged classicist. With his complete command of the horn, Freeman can now move in any direction he pleases—the ultimate freedom.

**IRIDIUM,** 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Dec. 20: The **JAMES CARTER** quintet. "In Carterian Fashion," the loquacious saxophon-



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ist's latest disk, which also features funky keyboards, was unfortunately a blustery bust. But in performance, there's reason to hope that things will straighten themselves out. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

**KNITTING FACTORY,** 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Dec. 16: New York's favorite modernist klezmer band, the **KLEZMATICS.** In the Old Office, unpredictable, edgy jazz from smart guys: **DREW GRESS** on bass, **TIM BERNE** on sax, **URI CAINE** on keyboards, and **JIM BLACK** on drums. Dec. 18: Visionary fretmen **ELLIOTT SHARP, VERNON REID,** and **DAVID TORN** provide twenty-first-century guitar heroics. Beginning Dec. 21: The whole mishpocheh may not be turning out for "Jewsapalooza," a Semitic new-music hoedown, but enough downtown mensches will be on hand to provide musical allure and merriment for all. **MARTY EHRLICH'S DARK WOODS ENSEMBLE** (Dec. 21) features the brilliant woodwind player, along with bassist **MARK HELIAS,** cellist **ERIC FRIEDLANDER,** and guitarist **MARC RIBOT.** On Dec. 22, skewed klezmer, Eastern European explorations, and new-jazz digressions come together by way of Klezmatics stalwart **FRANK LONDON** and his **PSYCHEDELICATESSEN** and the quirky combo **BRAD SHEPICK AND THE COMMUTERS.**

**MICHAEL'S PUB,** 109 E. 56th St (758-2272)—**JULIE WILSON,** the doyenne of New York's chanteuses, is in the midst of an open-ended run dedicated to George Gershwin.

**RAINBOW & STARS,** 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—You'll never find another plush, Art Deco shrine like this landmark, which closes its doors for good on Dec. 19. **LOU RAWLS** (starting Dec. 16) is the final performer. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Hilary Kole. Closed Mondays.

**SWEET BASIL,** 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Dec. 19: Where most bop pianists approach their keyboard like Secretariat on a good day, **BARRY HARRIS** is a seducer, easing into his runs with a satin touch, always placing melody before rampant virtuosity. His longtime foil is **CHARLES DAVIS,** a winning tenor and baritone saxophonist. Dining.

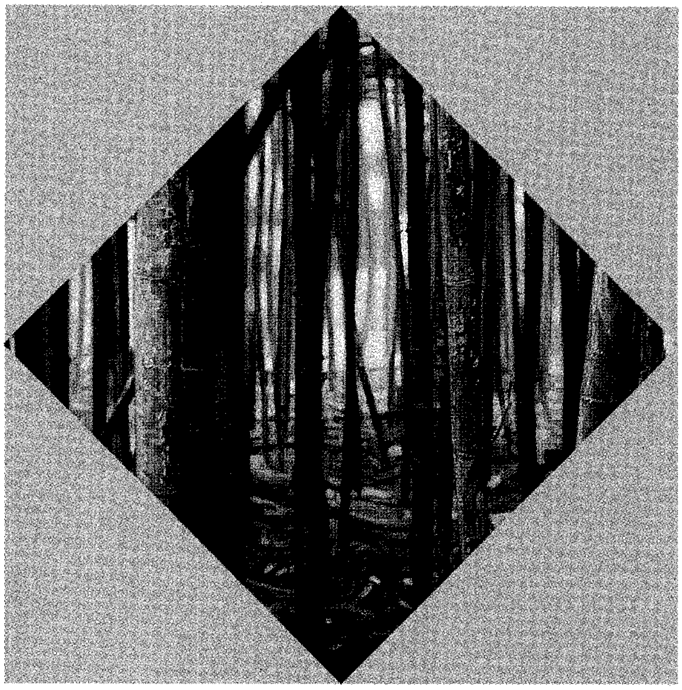
**VILLAGE VANGUARD,** 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Dec. 20: **JACKIE MC LEAN** with the **CEDAR WALTON** trio. In the fifties, alto saxophonist McLean was a sideman on early Miles Davis sessions; by the sixties, players like the iconoclastic Ornette Coleman had appeared as sidemen on McLean recordings. Having kept himself in the fray for decades, McLean is now a compact compendium of modern jazz. His range makes the distinctions between bop, hard bop, and modal playing disappear. Having the expert pianist Cedar Walton's group behind him will only up the improvisational ante. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

**ZINNO,** 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Dec. 16-19: Amiable, dependable, polished; pianist **JOHN BUNCH,** guitarist **BUCKY PIZZARELLI,** and bassist **JAY LEONHART** aren't in the business of ruffling feathers. What they do best is provide a broadloom of gently intoxicating swing. Dining.

# ART

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**METROPOLITAN MUSEUM,** Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Anselm Kiefer: Works on Paper, 1969-93." Through March 21. . . . ¶ "Edgar Degas, Photographer." The influence of photography on Impressionist painting has long been established; here Degas seems to be returning the favor, exploiting avant-gardist, painterly effects in the mechanical medium. Through Jan. 3. . . . ¶ "Donato Creti: Melancholy and Perfection" showcases an early-eighteenth-century painter (1671-1749), the last in a line of Bolognese classicists. Through Jan. 31. . . . ¶ "Charles Burchfield from the Collection," a survey of the museum's holdings of this great, eccentric American painter (1893-1967). Through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ "Félix Vallotton: Woodcuts and Three Paintings." Through Feb. 21. . . . ¶ "Mary Cassatt: Drawings and Prints in the Met," a selection of more than fifty works on paper from the museum's collections. Through Jan. 24. . . . ¶ "From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in the Metropolitan Museum." Through Jan. 17. . . . ¶ "Cubism and Fashion," at the Costume Institute. Through March 14. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)



*"Landscape #6 (Sapa)," by Brenda Zlamany, at Stux.*

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART,** 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Jackson Pollock," a comprehensive retrospective—the first in the United States since 1967—of the artist many regard as the most influential American painter of this century. It would be hard to fault the installation or the choice of works: in addition to many smaller drawings and canvases, the Modern has secured all of the major large pictures, from the mural that Peggy Guggenheim commissioned for her foyer in 1943 to the late "Blue Poles" (1952). Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ In conjunction with the Pollock show, the drawings department has gathered some eighty works by New York School artists, from early Abstract Expressionist stuff by the young Rothko and Gorky to mature work by Rauschenberg and Johns. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ "New Photography: Jeanne Dunning, Olafur Eliasson, Rachel Harrison, Sam Taylor-Wood," the fourteenth installment of the museum's survey series. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ "Focus: Pollock and Printmaking." Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ "Dubuffet to de Kooning: Expressionist Prints from Europe and America." Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ "Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles." Through Jan. 26. . . . ¶ An exhibition of lamps by Ingo Maurer and furniture by Fernando and Humberto Campana, in the project room. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM,** Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Rendezvous: Masterpieces from the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Guggenheim Museums" includes works by Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Kandinsky, and other modern masters. Through Jan. 24. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM SOHO,** 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Premises," a spectacular disaster in which two mediocre exhibitions (one of postwar French architecture, the other of postwar French installation and performance art) collide, to the benefit of neither. Through Jan. 10. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

**WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART,** Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—"Duane Hanson (1925-96): A Survey of His Work from the Thirties to the Nineties" features more than thirty of the startlingly lifelike sculptures of everyday people. Opens Dec. 17. . . . ¶ The first full-scale retrospective of the work of the painter Bob Thompson. Through Jan. 3. . . . ¶ An exhibition of fifty-two Brice Marden drawings from the museum's collection includes large-scale works and small sketches

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from the artist's workbook. Through March 28. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

**American Museum of Natural History,** Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter" offers some four hundred examples of lepidoptera at rest and in flight in a specially constructed vivarium. Through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ "Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou" presents an astonishing array of objects—dolls, flags, rattles, pots, calabashes, medicine packets, paintings—more than five hundred in all, which bring to life the vivid history and practice of the Afro-Caribbean religion. Through Jan. 3. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

**Brooklyn Museum of Art,** Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch," an exhibition of a hundred large-scale court and religious paintings, manuscripts, and enamels done in the representational style that flourished under the dynasty that ruled Iran from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Through Jan. 24. . . . ¶ "Japonism in Fashion: Japan Dresses the West." Through Feb. 14. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

**Dia Center for the Arts,** 548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—The museum has installed sixty of the hundred and two "Shadow" paintings by Andy Warhol in its collection. The works were executed in 1979 by photographing a cardboard maquette and then enlarging the image. The effects, especially considering the variations of silk-screened colors Warhol imposed, are sometimes tenuously representational, sometimes entirely abstract. On the whole, these paintings convey a subdued menace, a dour melancholia appropriate to their title; one senses lurking danger. This diffuse but powerful feeling is also present in other roughly contemporaneous Warhol series, such as the "Skulls." At the same time, it reflects his interest in abstraction (see, for instance, the "Camouflage" series at Gagosian in SoHo). Through June 13. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

### GALLERIES—UPTOWN

*(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)*

**Sigmar Polke**—"Printing Errors," a suite of recent paintings by the artist who vies with Gerhard Richter and Anselm Kiefer for the title of Most Famous Living German Artist. "Mixed-medium" is an understatement with respect to these works, which typically incorporate fabric supports, thick surfaces of translucent resin, even chicken wire. With his characteristic perversity, Polke assembled an archive of printing errors, which he then used as the basis for new paintings. One has to admire an artist who creates paintings of rare subtlety and beauty by resorting to the kind of materials that most others would simply discard. Through Jan. 16. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623.)

**Ena Swansea**—Large paintings of blurry, shadowy branches, as though reflected in the surface of a river. Restricting her palette to mauves, pinks, and grays, Swansea makes a strangely crepuscular début: it's easy to imagine these leafy, listless images as the kind of thing the waterlogged Ophelia might have stared at as she sank. Through Jan. 9. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454.)

**Bob Thompson** (1937-66)—A small, lively show that serves as a coda or teaser to the current Whitney retrospective. Thompson's joyful paint-by-numbers style can look misleadingly folky, so it's helpful to see his paintings accompanied here (as they are not at the Whitney) by drawings, which show off his evidently trained and agile hand. Mostly portraits of friends and jazz musicians, these incisive sketches call to mind such contemporaries of Thompson as Fairfield Porter and Alice Neel. Sadly, they also enhance one's sense of the potential forfeited when Thompson died at the age of twenty-nine. Through Jan. 9. (Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082.)

**Short List—JOHN ALEXANDER** and **PATRICK MIMRAN,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Both shows through Jan. 9. . . . **STEVEN ASSAEL,** Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545. Through Jan. 9. . . . **ROSS BLECKNER,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through Dec. 19; see also Downtown Short List. . . . **CHARLES BURCHFIELD,** Kennedy, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 541-9600. Through Dec. 31. . . . **WALTERCIO CALDAS,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470. Through Jan. 16. . . . **LEONORA CARRINGTON,** Brewster, 41 W. 57th St. 980-5373. Through Dec. 23. . . . **WILLIAM DUNLAP,** Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through Jan. 30. . . . **DEWITT GODFREY,** The Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St. 879-3500. Through Dec. 24. . . . **RICO LE BRUN,** MB Modern, 41 E. 57th St. 371-3444. Through Dec. 31. . . . **WES MILLS** and **JULIE ALLEN,** Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888. Both shows through Jan. 16. . . . **JOHN MOORE,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through Dec. 31. . . . **JILL MOSER,** Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through Dec. 30. . . . **GABRIEL OROZCO,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Open Mondays; through Jan. 9. . . . **LUCAS SAMARAS,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through Jan. 2. . . . **EDGAR SORBERÓN,** Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. 399-5510. Through Jan. 9. . . . **RICHARD TIPPING,** Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444. Through Jan. 16.

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## ONLY CONNECT

**Glassdog** (http://glassdog.com)—It should be obvious that any fool can create a Web site—so many have. Not long ago the Web was so shamelessly personal that nearly every page, hung with care and self-absorption, advertised its author's devotion to Stratocasters, "Star Trek," steroids, or Switzerland—whatever. (For a bellyful of examples, visit Tripod, which gives its users the tools to make HTML pages, then clusters the results in "pods" according to areas of interest.) These days the best personal pages don't just passionately share the author's passion, they also inform. Come, they beckon, play my game; I'll even show you how.

The Web designer Lance Arthur has had his own home page, Glassdog, since 1996, but in this do-it-yourself world he's a titan who blows away the competition. Think Phil Spector at an indie-record conference. And while he includes his requisite deep thoughts (was everyone on the Internet upset about "The X-Files" season's starting late?) and the ongoing "Life Serial," in which he has reflected on everything from the L.A. punk band X to the Oscars, his site is not, strictly speaking, just a song of himself. In fact, his best ideas are interactive. "Overheard," for instance, features bits of amusing eavesdropped conversation, submitted by readers from around the world; "Vacation Project" showcases readers' stories inspired by anonymous snapshots.

The site is beautiful, and Arthur lets his readers in on how he does his voodoo, with tricks of the trade, caveats, and discussions of browser-safe design. But he's not proscriptive like many other designers, who condemn the ugly, utilitarian sites that abound and instruct readers never to use this color or that font. Arthur's advice? "Concentrate on making what you have to say more important than how you say it."

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## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

**Doug Aitken**—In "Eraser," the larger of the artist's two video installations here, the viewer moves through different rooms, each of which includes multiple video projections of the Soufrière volcano on the island of Montserrat. The images shift from modest local houses and streets to the unearthly terrain of the volcano. Aitken continues to refine his penchant for distant, inaccessible landscapes (a previous video was filmed in the desert terrain of the South African diamond-mining region). For all the high-tech resources, his vision seems quite romantic in its quest for the unknown and uninhabited. Through Jan. 16. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

**Francis Bacon, Louise Bourgeois, Franz Xaver Messerschmidt**—An extraordinary and bizarre group show in which two familiar postwar artists with Surrealist affiliations are united with the Austrian Baroque sculptor Messerschmidt. The contemporary works are predictably interesting and of high quality, but the nine portrait busts by Messerschmidt—essays in tortured physiognomies which rival anything produced in our own century—are the real surprise. With their agonized expressions, comic horror, and transformations of the human visage so extreme they become fully monstrous, Messerschmidt's grotesques give Bacon's shrieking popes a run for their money. Through Dec. 31. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

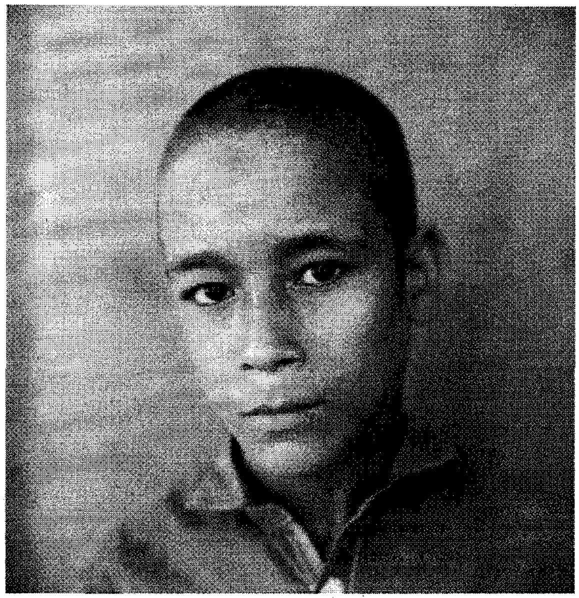
**William Cotton**—Paintings of confectionary architecture—a trailer home made of Necco wafers, housing projects of bittersweet chocolate, and actual cookie-cutter cottages, nestled in groves of lollipops. Unlike Cotton's earlier, delightfully dopey paintings of bathtub toys, these feel solemn and barren. The sky is a leaden, unvarying blue, long shadows fall across the frosted lawns, and Hansel and Gretel—or their contemporary equivalents—seem to have moved to a healthier neighborhood. Through Dec. 23. (Silverstein, 520 W. 21st St. 929-4300.)

**Suzanne Joelson**—A show called "Family," with paintings in mattress sizes: infant, child, twin, full, queen, and king. Each is a maelstrom, swarming with goggle eyes, toothed hands, and kaleidoscopic rivulets of bright, sour color. In "Queen," the pink-and-crimson combination becomes overbearingly gory, in a splatter-flick way. But in the smaller sizes, especially "Young Twin" and "Sick Twin," Joelson's abstractions feel comical and even delicate, like grandchildren of Pollock, sleeping their way out of the family trauma. Through Dec. 19. (Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080.)

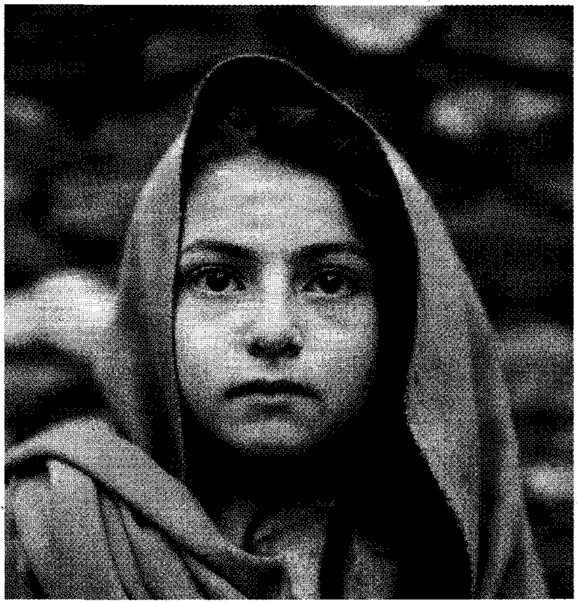
**Lawrence Seward**—An updated version of Rodin's "Gates of Hell," featuring multiple mixed-medium versions of a clambering Everyman character in bluejeans and a white T-shirt. On the gallery floor, more of these Everymen gyrate, wrestle, divide in two, and cope with some sort of unidentified goo. Through Dec. 23. (Kreps, 529 W. 20th St. 741-8849.)

**Brenda Zlamany**—Southeast Asian landscapes in bright color and soft focus, and wary, golden portraits of artists, among other subjects. The application of paint is rough and sensual, in a style that recalls both AbEx and Old Master hands (neat trick!). For all the unblinking realism of the formal portraits, their air is wistful and not at all harsh—the effect one might expect if the subject of a Lucian Freud portrait broke the solemn reverie and looked fondly at the painter. Through Jan. 2. (Stux, 529 W. 20th St. 352-1600.)

**"Bowie"**—An engaging group show featuring works in various mediums. In this season of Todd Haynes's "Velvet Goldmine" and Marilyn Manson's retro-glam-rock persona, the show couldn't be more timely. Such a large selection of works by diverse artists almost inevitably leads to a variation in quality, but there's plenty of good stuff to look at. Standouts include video and photographs by Alex Bag in which she tricks up fellow-artist Patterson Beckwith in different Bowie guises; Jane Kaplowitz's painting of a pallid "Low"-era Bowie; and Rob Pruitt's live chameleon—named David—living in a tank with rainbow-colored gravel and multicolored lights. Through Jan. 9. (Goldsworthy, 453 W. 17th St. 414-4560.)



*Two portraits of Afghan children by Fazal Sheikh, in a show of new work at Pace Wildenstein MacGill.*



**Short List**—**MICHAEL BEVILACQUA**, Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through Jan. 16. . . . **ELLEN CANTOR**, XL, 504 W. 22nd St. 462-4111. Through Jan. 16. . . . **VERNE DAWSON**, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258. Through Jan. 16. . . . **WILLEM DE KOONING**, Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through Dec. 19. . . . **THORNTON DIAL**, Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Jan. 16. . . . **VINCENT GALLO**, Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through Jan. 10. . . . **FELIX GONZALEZ-TORRES**, Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through Jan. 16. . . . **ROSS KNIGHT**, Team, 527 W. 26th St. 279-9219. Through Dec. 19. . . . **REINHARD MUCHA**, Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100. Through Jan. 9. . . . **JACQUES ROCH**, Foster, 529 W. 20th St. 966-9024. Through Dec. 31. . . . **THOMAS SCHEIBITZ**, Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 414-4144. Through Jan. 9. . . . **GARY SIMMONS**, Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through Jan. 16. . . . **CHARLES SPURRIER**, Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500. Through Jan. 16.

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

**Suzanne McClelland**—Appealingly cryptic paintings that incorporate words and phrases. In one of the smallest, the word "boo" floats like a miniature houseboat down a brushy, muddy river. In the largest work, "ENOUGH" is painted backward and forward in bright pink and occupies the walls of an enormous room. These images snuggle into your imagination like anxiety dreams. Through Dec. 31. (Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219.)

**"Lot/Ek"**—For "TV Tank," the Italian architectural team of Ada Tolla and Giuseppe Lignano sliced a thirty-five-foot tank of an oil truck into eight ring-shaped compartments, each fitted with a television set. Impressively vast and well crafted, this installation aims for a kind of hollow irony and achieves it. Through Jan. 2. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

**Short List**—**FRANCIS BACON**, Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300. Through Jan. 16. . . . **VIVIAN E. BROWNE**, June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 226-1660. Through Jan. 5. . . . **GEORGE CONDO**, Gering, 476 Broome St. 226-8195. Through Jan. 9. . . . **R. M. FISCHER**, Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300. Through Jan. 2. . . . **AUDREY FLACK**, Meisel, 141 Prince St. 677-1340. Through Jan. 23. . . . **ALFRED JENSEN**, Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. 966-1831. Through Jan. 9. . . . **JOSEPH KOSUTH**, **RICHARD SERRA**, and **KEITH SONNIER**, Castelli, 420 West Broadway. 431-5160. All shows through Jan. 16. . . . **MANUEL NERI**, Cowles, 420 West Broadway. 925-3500. Through Jan. 30. . . . **JULIÃO SARMENTO**, Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405. Through Jan. 24. . . . **MIMI SMITH**, Kustera, 41 Wooster St. 965-1527. Through Jan. 16. . . . **ANNELIES ŠTRBA**, Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9520. Through Dec. 19. . . . **LUC TUYMANS**, Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through Dec. 23. . . . **ANDY WARHOL**, Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828. Through Jan. 9.

## AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

**Sotheby's**—Dec. 16: Fine Oriental and European carpets. . . . ¶ Dec. 17: An auction of antiquities and Islamic art, including the J. L. Theodor collection of some thirty Athenian black-figure vases. . . . ¶ Dec. 18: A "collectors' carrousel," including all sorts of things that would look good under the Christmas tree: Harpo Marx's gold cigarette lighter, a Mark McGwire bat, John Lennon's order form for two subscriptions to *The New Yorker*—that sort of thing. . . . ¶ Dec. 19: Coins and banknotes. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

**Christie's**—Dec. 17: The Haddad family collection of ancient erotic and amuletic art, comprising hundreds of objects, chiefly Greek and Roman, produced between the fifth century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. "Perhaps the most important lot in the sale," Christie's demurely suggests, "is a pair of Roman bronze fittings, each of superb quality, exquisitely cast in the form of a pair of lovers copulating a tergo (estimate: $35,000-$45,000)." . . . ¶ Dec. 18: Antiquities. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.) . . . At **CHRISTIE'S EAST**: Dec. 16: Books. . . . ¶ Dec. 22: Decorative art. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

**Doyle**—Furniture, decorative art, and paintings. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. Dec. 16.)

# PHOTOGRAPHY

**Virginia Beahan & Laura McPhee**—"No Ordinary Land," a dozen meditative, often mesmerizing color landscapes of places ranging from a burned-out foundation of a home in the Santa Monica Mountains to a verdant tea plantation dotted with flame trees in Sri Lanka. Through Dec. 23. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220. . . . ¶ A concurrent show is at Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555. Through Feb. 6.)

**"Camera Work"**—Photogravures from Stieglitz's legendary turn-of-the-century journal by, among others, Steichen, Käsebier, Coburn, and Strand. Through Jan. 7. (Platinum, 551 W. 22nd St. 352-0070.)

**"The Cultured Tourist"**—Travel photographs made since the seventies alongside pictures from the nineteenth century, including works by Michel Auder, Lynn Davis, Vik Muniz, Beat Streuli, Tseng Kwong Chi, Felice Beato, Bisson Frères, and Carleton Watkins. Through Dec. 19. (Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450.)

**"Images of Miles"**—Black-and-white photographs of the trumpeter, by William Gottlieb, Herb Snitzer, Chuck Stewart, and Lee Tanner, among others. Through Jan. 10. (Jazz Gallery, 290 Hudson St., at Spring St. 242-1063. Opens at 1; open Sundays.)

**"Pioneers of Soviet Photography, 1918-1939"**—Works by Alexander Rodchenko, Max Alpert, Georgi Zelma, Dmitri Debanov, and Ivan Shagin. Through Dec. 31. (Schickler, 560 Broadway. 431-6363.)

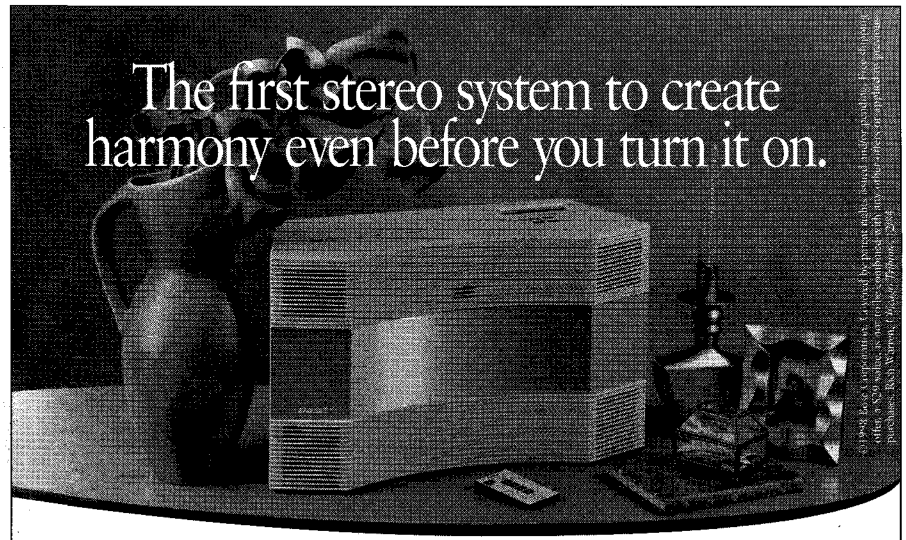
**"Skin/Deep"**—A historical survey of "interior imaging," from X-rays to MRIs, including works by Andrew Bush, Helmut Newton, Vik Muniz, and Annie Leibovitz. Through Jan. 16. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.)

**International Center of Photography**—"Bruce Davidson: The Brooklyn Gang, 1959." Through March 7. . . . ¶ "Intimate City: The Photographs of Thomas Roma." Through March 7. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

**International Center of Photography Midtown**—"Man Ray: Photography and Its Double," a large show of works from the artist's archives, which are housed at the Pompidou Center, in Paris. Through Jan. 24. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

**Short List**—**ANSEL ADAMS,** Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300. Through Jan. 9. . . . **DICK ARENTZ,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Jan. 16. . . . **LYNN DAVIS,** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through Jan. 16. . . . **PHILIP-LORCA DI CORCIA,** Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224. Through Jan. 16. . . . **JOHN DUGDALE,** Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St. 242-8811. Open Sundays; through Jan. 3. . . . **LYNN GEESAMAN,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Through Jan. 9. . . . **LARRY GIANETTINO,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Jan. 16. . . . **JAN GROOVER** and **LEE FRIEDLANDER,** Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Both shows through Dec. 31. . . . **KENRO IZU,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through Jan. 23. . . . **GEORGE KRAUSE,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Jan. 23. . . . **NICHOLAS NIXON,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through Jan. 23. . . . **CHARLES PRATT,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through Jan. 23. . . . **FAZAL SHEIKH,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through Jan. 16. . . . **ALEX WEBB,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-6960. Opens at noon on Saturdays; through Jan. 9.

*(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art.)*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## CLASSICAL MUSIC

*(The box-office number for Avery Fisher Hall is 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; and for the Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St., 570-3949.)*

### HOLIDAY MUSIC

**St. Bartholomew's Choir**—Dec. 16 at 7:30: Works by Gabrieli, Praetorius, and others, in a candlelit concert, with the assistance of the American Boychoir and the audience (which may help out in the carols). (For information about tickets, call 378-0248.) . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 5: A family Christmas pageant, with music by Anthony Piccolo, performed by the church's choral ensembles. (No tickets necessary.) (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St.)

**Christmas at St. Patrick's**—The St. Patrick's Cathedral Choir, St. George's Choral Society, and two youth choirs participate in a concert that includes audience carolling. (Fifth Ave. at 51st St. Dec. 17 at 7:15. Admission by contribution.)

**Carolling**—A musical stroll with the West Village Chorale. (Leaving from St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. For information, call 570-7301. Dec. 18 at 7.)

**New York Pops**—Skitch Henderson leads standards in a program featuring the Fort Worth-Texas Christian University Symphonic Choir. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 18-19 at 8.)

**Quartetto Gelato**—The ensemble of tenor, oboe, accordion, and cello offers arrangements of seasonal favorites. (Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 19 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

**Boricua College Chorus**—Abraham Lind-Oquendo leads a program that includes Christmas folk music from Puerto Rico, African-American spirituals, and excerpts from Handel's "Messiah" (sung in Spanish). (Church of the Blessed Sacrament, 152 W. 71st St. Dec. 19 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

**Canticum Novum Singers**—Harold Rosenbaum directs seasonal pieces from six centuries. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Dec. 19 at 8. . . . ¶ St. Ignatius Episcopal Church, West End Ave. at 87th St. Dec. 20 at 7:30. For information about tickets to either concert, call 914-763-3453.)

**Lionheart**—The men's vocal sextet performs Christmas music from medieval England, including carols from the songbook of Henry VIII. (Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 650-2280. Dec. 20 at 1 and 3.)

**Beethoven's Ninth**—The "Choral" Symphony has become a year-end staple in Japan, where massive choirs assemble annually to belt out the "Ode to Joy" in the finale. In this concert, members of Japan's Symphony No. 9 Society are joined by the Chuo University Orchestra (from Tokyo), a small army of American choristers, and a quartet of Japanese soloists, all conducted by Kazuhiko Komatsu. Sibelius's "Finlandia" and Schoenberg's orchestral transcription of Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E-Flat Major (BWV 654) round out the program. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 20 at 2.)

**Holiday Brass**—Festive fare from the Canadian Brass and a quintet of brass players from the New York Philharmonic. (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 20 at 3.)

**"Brandenburg" Concertos**—Bach's peerless half-dozen concerti grossi have become a sort of secular December tradition for two of the town's leading purveyors of chamber music. Dec. 20 and Dec. 24 at 7:30: **BARGEMUSIC** presents the Concertos No. 2, No. 4, and No. 5. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. . . . **NOTE:** The other three concertos will be performed on Dec. 27, and all six on New Year's Eve.) . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 5 and Dec. 22 at 7:30: All six "Brandenburgs," performed by members of the **CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER,** plus a few guests. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050.)

**Choirs and Strings of St. Ignatius Loyola**—Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols," Vaughan Williams's "Fantasia on Christmas Carols," Renaissance motets, and sing-along carols, directed by Kent Tritle. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-2520. Dec. 20 at 4.)

**Anonymous 4**—The women's vocal quartet offers Christmas music and readings from medieval England. (Medieval Court, Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 20 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

**National Jewish Chorale and Orchestra**—Matthew Lazar directs Hanukkah music on the eighth night. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 20 at 8.)

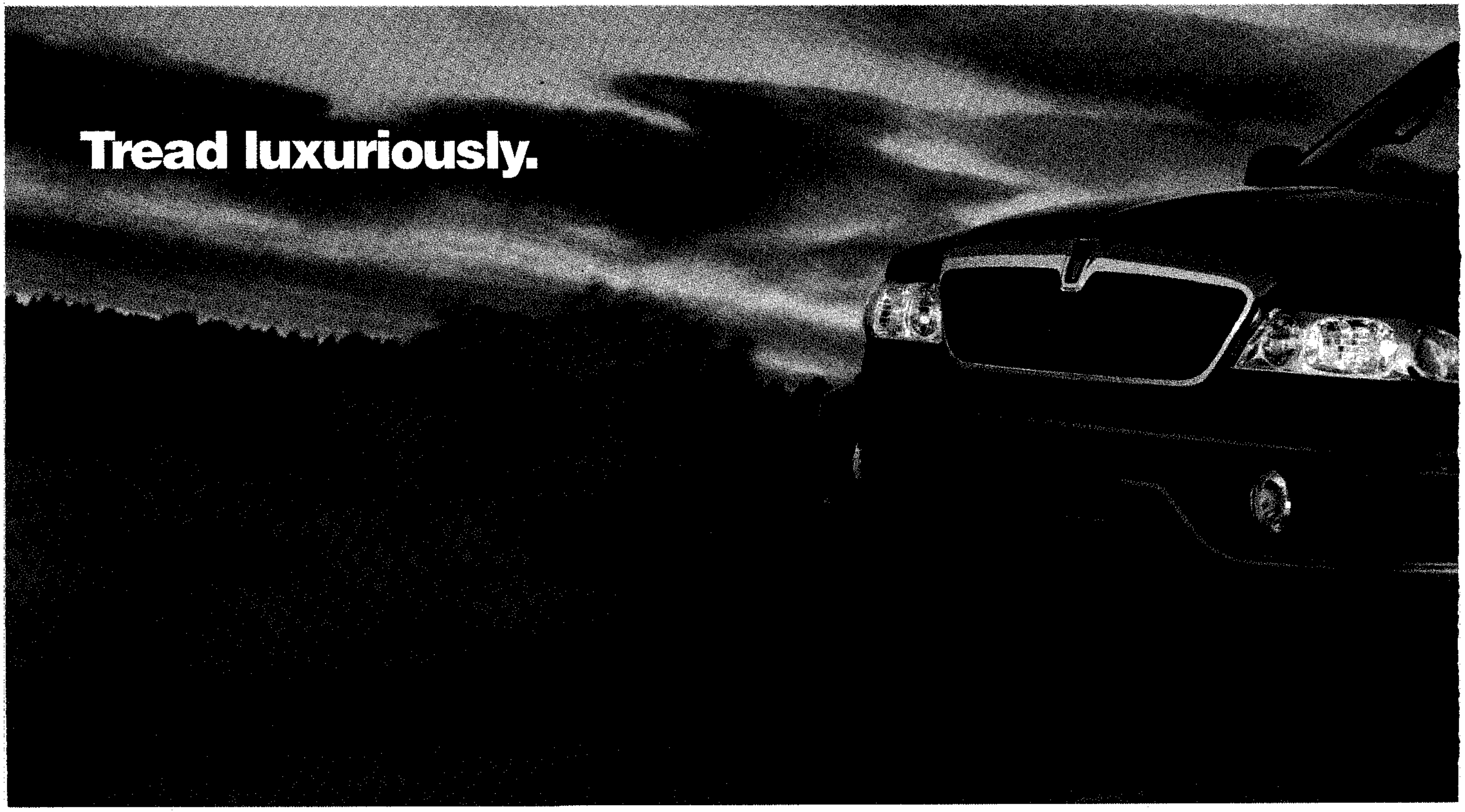
**Dawn Upshaw and the Aulos Ensemble**—The period-instrument group performs chamber works by Telemann and Corrette and assists Ms. Upshaw in songs and arias by Bach. (Medieval Court, Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 21 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

**New York City Gay Men's Chorus**—In his first season as the group's music director, Barry Oliver leads a holiday program. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 21 at 8.)

**Heidi Grant Murphy and Auréole**—The soprano joins forces with the flute-viola-and-harp trio for an international lineup of carols and art songs. (Medieval Court, Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 22 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

**Western Wind**—The vocal sextet, assisted by members of the Folger Consort, offers Renaissance and Baroque Christmas music from Spain and Latin America, including pieces from the cathedrals of Mexico City and Puebla, Peru. (Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, 869 Lexington Ave., at 66th St. Dec. 22 at 8. For information about tickets, call 873-2848.)

**Handel's "Messiah," Many Times Over**—Dec. 16 at 8: The Musica Sacra chorus and orchestra, with soprano Brenda Harris, mezzo-soprano Judith Malafronte, tenor Jon Garrison, and bass-baritone Stephen Bryant; conducted by Richard Westenburg. (Car-



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negie Hall.) . . . The National Chorale and Orchestra, directed by Martin Josman. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 7:30: Gerre Hancock directs the St. Thomas Choir of Men and Boys, Concert Royal, and soloists Amanda Balestrieri (soprano), Jennifer Lane (mezzo-soprano), Jeffrey Thomas (tenor), and Curtis Streetman (bass). (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 664-9360.) . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 8: Lyndon Woodside leads the Oratorio Society of New York, the Westchester Philharmonic Orchestra, soprano Yunah Lee, mezzo-soprano Dulce Reyes, tenor Steven Tharp, and bass Scott Altman. (Carnegie Hall.) . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 7:30 and 10:30: "The Downtown Messiah," an abridged and much modified pop version for the intrepid, with far-from-classical soloists, a small chorus (with audience participation invited), and an accompanying club band. (Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. 228-6300.) . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 3: The Trinity Choir and the Early Music Ensemble Rebel, directed by Owen Burdick. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. 602-0873. . . . **NOTE:** On Dec. 21 at noon, the same performers offer the oratorio's Christmas portion, at St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 8: Eighteen conductors take turns leading the audience in the National Choral Council's annual sing-along. (Avery Fisher Hall.)

## OPERA

**Metropolitan Opera**—**LA TRAVIATA,** with Patricia Racette, Marcelo Alvarez, and Vladimir Chernov; conducted by Carlo Rizzi. (Dec. 16 at 8 and Dec. 19 at 1:30.) . . . With Ainhoa Arteta instead of Ms. Racette. (Dec. 22 at 8.) . . . **DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE,** with Dawn Upshaw, Laura Aikin, Paul Groves, Matthias Goerne, and Franz-Josef Selig; Charles Mackerras. (Dec. 17 and Dec. 19 at 8.) . . . **LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR,** with Ruth Ann Swenson, Ramón Vargas, Roberto Frontali, and Alastair Miles; Mr. Rizzi. (Dec. 18 and Dec. 21 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

**"Monsters of Grace"**—A multimedia opera with music by Philip Glass and 3-D eyeglasses (supplied to all attendees) by I.a.Eyeworks. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Dec. 16-18 at 7:30, Dec. 19 at 2 and 7:30, and Dec. 20 at 3.)

**Amato Opera Company**—Presenting a macaronic production of "The Barber of Seville," in which the major numbers are sung in Italian and the recitatives in English. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Dec. 18-19 at 7:30. Through Jan. 3.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

**New York Philharmonic**—At Avery Fisher Hall, Bobby McFerrin conducting. Dec. 17-19 at 8: The orchestra's Gershwin centennial celebration concludes with abridged concert performances of "Porgy and Bess," featuring bass-baritone Kevin Deas and soprano Marvis Martin in the title roles. Filling out the roster are sopranos Harolyn Blackwell and Camellia Johnson, tenor Michael Forest, baritone Lester Lynch, and the Morgan State University Choir. . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 2: Excerpts from "Porgy and Bess," in a Young People's Concert, with Indira Mahajan instead of Ms. Blackwell.

**Riverside Choral Society**—Patrick Gardner directs the choir and orchestra in Pärt's "Te Deum," Holst's settings of Psalms No. 86 and No. 148, and, with pianist Margaret Kampmeier, Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 1. (Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Madison Ave. at 73rd St. Dec. 18 at 8. For information about tickets, call 780-2181.)

**Candlelight Concert**—An annual event of choral and luminous coruscation, with Gail Archer leading the Barnard-Columbia Chorus and St. Paul's Chapel Orchestra. This year, the musical fare comprises Bach's Cantata No. 79, Haydn's "Te Deum," Bruckner's Psalm No. 150, and Janáček's "Glagolitic" Mass. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, enter at Broadway and 116th St. Dec. 18-19 at 8. For information about tickets, call 854-1540.)

**Jupiter Symphony**—Jens Nygaard conducts Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 and "Choral" Fantasy (the latter featuring pianist William Wolfram). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Dec. 21 at 7. For information about tickets, call 799-1259. A benefit concert.)

**"Comfort Ye"**—This concert, now in its fourth year, is a demonstration of good will by singers from the solo rosters of the Metropolitan Opera and New York City Opera, organized annually by soprano Lauren Flanigan for the benefit of the homeless and hungry. The performers and repertoire are rarely confirmed until the last minute, but several well-known figures are always in the lineup, joining Ms. Flanigan and conductors and pianists Kemal Khan, Dan Saunders, and Larry Woodard. (West Park Presbyterian Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 86th St. Dec. 22 at 7. Admission by contribution, at the door, of five canned or dried food items, a clean overcoat or blanket, two packages of diapers, or a sizable cash donation.)

## RECITALS

**Leonardo Trio**—The ensemble performs trios by Beethoven (in G Major, Op. 1, No. 2), Wolfgang Rihm (his "Fremde Szene III," composed in 1983-84), and Schumann (in D Minor). (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. Dec. 16 at 7. Tickets at the door.)

**Cygnus Ensemble**—The contemporary-music group, with pianist and harpsichordist Sara Laimon, performs works by Sebastian Currier, Elliott Carter (his Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello, and Harpsichord), Meyer

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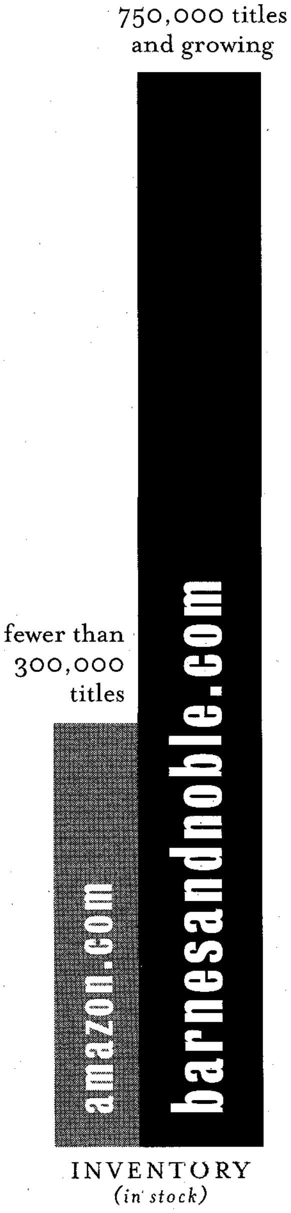

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Kupferman, Robert Martin (a première), and John Halle. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Dec. 17 at 8.)

**Elsner String Quartet, Plus**—The foursome is joined by pianist Regina Yung for Schumann's Piano Quintet and by the American String Quartet for Mendelssohn's Octet. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Dec. 17 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

**Alma**—This duo—soprano Anna Bartos and pianist Fabio Gardenal—offers a program of vocal and solo-piano music by Spanish and Latin-American composers. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Dec. 18 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

**It Takes Four**—Brahms's C-Minor Piano Quartet gets a couple of workouts from pianist Ilan Rechtman and several string-playing colleagues. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Dec. 20 at noon. . . . ¶ Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Dec. 20 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

**Peter Bond**—The trumpeter, a member of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, is assisted by pianist Kimberly Russ in works by Bach, George Antheil, Jean Françaix, and Henri Tomasi and is joined by mezzo-soprano Carla Bond for a song cycle by Eric Ewazen. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Dec. 20 at 6. Admission by contribution.)

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

**That Magic Moment**—Self-proclaimed urban shaman Donna Henes leads what she calls "a magical mystery, over-land, over-water, tour" to mark the winter solstice. The journey is by bus and includes "all kinds of transformational activities, makeup, costumes," and ends with a drumming and chanting ceremony on the beaches along the southern shore of Staten Island, where she promises "pyrotechnical treats." "It is a spark of light in the dark of winter," Henes says, adding that "when the winter solstice arrives, the days actually start getting longer. The worst is over." (Dec. 21. Buses depart Grand Army Plaza, in Brooklyn, at 6:30 P.M., and Battery Park at 7:30. The ceremony is set to coincide with the moment of the solstice, 8:56. For more information, and reservations, call 718-857-2247.)

**"La Befana"**—Four masked actors, one accordionist, and some twenty puppets act out an Italian folktale about an old woman who, after noticing a strange star and receiving a visit from three kings, goes in search of a holy child. Written and directed by Theresa Linnihan. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 598-0400. Dec. 18 at 7:30 and Dec. 19 at 2.)

**Seasonal Tracks**—Phil Kline, composer and master of the tape recorder, leads an ad-hoc ensemble of some fifty boom-box-toting carollers—each playing a taped part of his work "Unsilent Night"—on a march through the streets of Greenwich Village. Those who bring their own boom box get to keep the tape. (Dec. 19 at 7, starting at the Washington Square Arch. For more information, call 227-6255.)

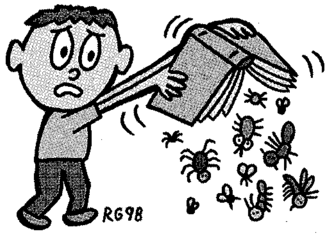
**Readings**—Dec. 16 at 7: By Robert Stone, Lawrence Block, and Cathleen Schine, from their respective novels, "Damascus Gate," "Everybody Dies," and "The Evolution of Jane." (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 7:30: By Julian Dibbell, Daniel Mendelsohn, Carl Hancock Rux, and Colson Whitehead, from their work. (Hell, 59 Gansevoort St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 8: Jonathan Miller directs a revival of Robert Lowell's verse drama "Benito Cereno," with two of the cast members he worked with on the first production, in 1964, actors Roscoe Lee Browne and Frank Langella. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

**Talk**—Dec. 21 at 8: Frank Rich and Al Hirschfeld discuss the world of the theatre. (Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. 840-6800.)

## BOOK CURRENTS

### *Bugged Out*

It's been a heartening year for insects, at least at the box office, where "Antz" and "A Bug's Life" are racking up healthy grosses. Though they've mostly been relegated to sub-B-movie status on the big screen (remember "The Wasp Woman"?), insects have long found more respectable treatment in books. The Greeks admired both ant and bee colonies as models of productive social order. In one story, Zeus turned a colony of ants into a people—the Myrmidons—for his son Aeacus (or Ajax) to rule over. The significance of this myth and others are elegantly pondered in **The King of the Ants** (Ecco), by the late Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert.



RODNEY ALAN GREENBLATT

This year saw a new addition to the insectile canon with the translation of a singular work by Victor Pelevin, one of Russia's most acclaimed young novelists. **The Life of Insects** (Farrar, Straus & Giroux) is a surreal romp through the world of post-Communist Russia in which the characters are alternately described as people and as insects. On a purely visual level, Barbara Norfleet makes similar insect-human comparisons in her book of photographs **The Illusion of Orderly Progress**, which comes out this spring (Knopf). Colorful specimens—grasshoppers, scarab beetles, dragonflies—are arranged in tableaux that suggest such human enterprises as political rallies, mountain climbing, and beauty pageants. In his foreword, the eloquent entomologist Edward O. Wilson explains that "easily recognizable foibles are expressed not with images of our precious and lovable selves . . . but with strangers whose behavior can be . . . honestly scrutinized."

That's all fine and good, but many people might be horrified to peruse **Man Eating Bugs: The Art and Science of Eating Insects** (Ten Speed Press), by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio, a photographic survey of worldwide entomophagy, from the deep-fried water bugs of Thailand to the candy-dipped crickets of California. And in David George Gordon's **Eat-a-Bug Cookbook** (Ten Speed again), committed insectivores will find ways to prepare such interesting additions to their diet as Cockroach à la King and Superworm Tempura with Plum Dipping Sauce.

Books.

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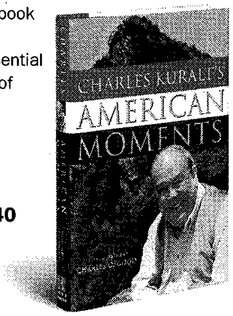

**DEAR SOCKS, DEAR BUDDY**

**by Hillary Rodham Clinton**

A warm and wonderful volume combining Mrs. Clinton's engaging text with fifty letters children have written to the First Pets—illustrated with more than eighty photographs of Socks and Buddy on the job and at play in the White House. All author proceeds from the book have been assigned to the National Park Foundation. (Simon & Schuster)

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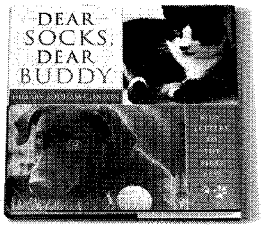

**THE POWER OF GLAMOUR**

**by Annette Tapert**

From Marlene Dietrich to Greta Garbo to Katherine Hepburn, here are stunning profiles of eleven Hollywood goddesses—women who defined the elusive power of glamour. The co-author of the popular *The Power of Style* explores the essence of each star: the image and wit, the mystery and intrigue that cast a spell on us all. (Crown)

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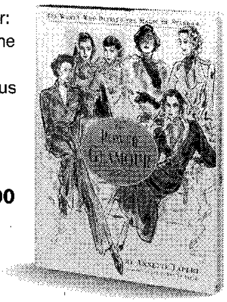

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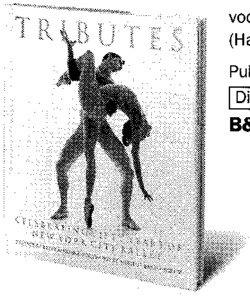

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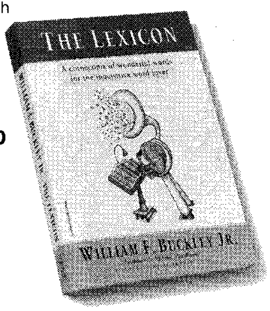

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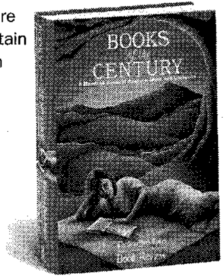

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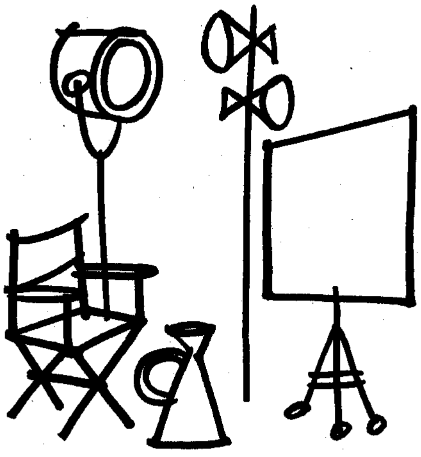
# THE MOVIES



## OPENING

**The Emperor's Shadow**—Zhou Xiaowen's tale of star-crossed lovers and the dawn of the Chinese dynasties. In Mandarin. Opening Dec. 18. (Cinema Village.)

**The General**—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Dec. 18. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**The Prince of Egypt**—An animated version of the story of Moses. Opening Dec. 18. (Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, and Union Square.)

**You've Got Mail**—Nora Ephron's update of Ernst Lubitsch's 1940 "The Shop Around the Corner," with rival bookstore owners (Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan) falling in love via E-mail. Opening Dec. 18. (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

## FILM NOTES

*(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)*

**American History X**—A muscled-up and swaggering Edward Norton plays a skinhead neo-Nazi in Venice Beach, California, and screenwriter David McKenna has composed some shrewd tirades for him that push only slightly past standard white working-class resentment. Norton gives the young thug an ambiguous erotic allure; he's almost appealing. Everything else in this melodrama, directed and photographed by the British commercial director Tony Kaye, is to be regretted—it's self-important and garish. The movie was taken away from Kaye during the editing phase. It should have been.—*David Denby* (First & 62nd Cinemas, Regency, and Village East Cinemas.)

**Babe: Pig in the City**—The sequel that surpasses the original. Babe, the extraordinarily polite pig with the sweetly persistent manner, tries to raise money in the great megalopolis for the ailing Hoggett farm. There Babe discovers a land of violence and sadness. At an animal hotel, Babe falls in with a circus family of monkeys, including a hip chimpanzee couple and a morose orangutan—the animals, who speak in dark ironies, have the real depression of lifetime circus performers. There is also an irascible, motoring Jack Russell terrier, whose arthritic hindquarters are mounted on wheels, and a variety of predatory mastiffs with an eye for porkers. Like its illustrious predecessor, "Babe: Pig in the City" has slightly oversaturated children's-book colors—oranges and yellows and blues—but the emotional tone of this movie is painfully funny, with violent, sardonic, and knowing touches that may leave children slightly baffled. The director, George Miller, works low to the ground, from the animals' point of view, and with great cartoon intensity. As before, the three mice, singing French cabaret songs and a bit of Deano, serenade each section of the movie. Written by Miller, Judy Morris, and Mark Lamprell.—*D.D.* (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street East, and Village East Cinemas.)

**A Bug's Life**—Okay for children. An ant colony tries to save itself from the aggressions of local grasshoppers by employing a bug circus in its defense. The Disney/Pixar animation is pastel-pretty kid stuff (the insects look like brightly colored plastic toys), and all the ants talk in cutely self-conscious locutions out of a sitcom, but the bug's-eye view of the world has its surprises and casual enchantments. With Kevin Spacey as the voice of the menacing chief grasshopper. Co-directed by John Lasseter and Andrew Stanton.—*D.D.* (Cinema I, Guild, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

**Celebrity**—Woody Allen assembles yet another all-star cast; this time, stardom itself is the object of his attention. Kenneth Branagh, trying out a Woody Allen impersonation that makes you want to hide under your seat and cram popcorn in your ears, plays a journalist with an itch. He hops from a rotten marriage with Robin (Judy Davis) to an actress (Melanie Griffith), and from there to a supermodel (Charlize Theron) with erogenous zones all over her body; he then takes up with a book editor of rare beauty (Famke Janssen), whom for some unfathomable reason he discards in favor of another actress (Winona Ryder). The hero's restlessness infects the rest of the movie; the story feels febrile and unhappy, and Allen seems to take his dissatisfaction out on his helpless characters—especially the women. Filmed in black-and-white by Sven Nykvist.—*Anthony Lane* (11/23/98) (Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

## THEATRE ADDRESSES

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*(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)*

**Angelika Film Center,** 18 W. Houston St.
**Art Greenwich Twin,** Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
**Astor Plaza,** 44th St. at Broadway.
**BAM Rose Cinemas,** 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-623-2770.
**Beekman,** Second Ave. at 66th St.
**Chelsea Cinemas,** 260 W. 23rd St.
**Chelsea West,** 333 W. 23rd St.
**Cinema I,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**Cinema II,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**Cinema 3rd Avenue,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**Cinema Village,** 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
**Coronet Cinemas,** Third Ave. at 59th St.
**Criterion Center,** Broadway at 44th St.
**East 85th Street,** First Ave. at 85th St.
**Eastside Playhouse,** Third Ave. at 55th St.
**84th Street Sixplex,** Broadway at 84th St.
**86th Street East Twin,** Third Ave. at 86th St.
**Embassy 1, 2, and 3,** Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
**59th Street East Cinema,** 239 E. 59th St.
**Film Forum,** W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
**First & 62nd Cinemas,** 400 E. 62nd St.
**Gotham Cinema,** Third Ave. at 58th St.
**Guild,** 33 W. 50th St.
**Lincoln Plaza Cinemas,** Broadway at 63rd St.
**Lincoln Square,** Broadway at 68th St.
**Metro Cinema 1 and 2,** Broadway at 99th St.
**Murray Hill Cinemas,** 160 E. 34th St.
**New York Twin,** Second Ave. at 67th St.
**19th Street East 6,** Broadway at 19th St.
**Olympia I and II,** Broadway at 107th St.
**Orpheum VII,** Third Ave. at 86th St.
**Paris,** 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
**Park & 86th Street Cinemas,** 125 E. 86th St.
**Quad Cinema,** 34 W. 13th St.
**Regency,** Broadway at 67th St.
**The Screening Room,** 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
**62nd & Broadway,** 62 W. 62nd St.
**64th and 2nd,** Second Ave. at 64th St.
**72nd Street East,** Third Ave. at 71st St.
**State,** Broadway at 45th St.
**Sutton 1 and 2,** Third Ave. at 57th St.
**34th Street Showplace,** 238 E. 34th St.
**Union Square,** Broadway at 13th St.
**Village East Cinemas,** Second Ave. at 12th St.
**Village Theatre VII,** Third Ave. at 11th St.
**Waverly 1 and 2,** Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
**Worldwide Cinemas,** 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
**Ziegfeld,** 141 W. 54th St.

**Central Station**—Against her nature, Dora (Fernanda Montenegro), an intelligent but nihilistic old bag—a retired schoolteacher who writes letters for illiterate people and then never mails them—leaves Rio de Janeiro with a little boy in tow and takes to the road. The boy's mother has been killed, and his desire to see his missing father stirs something in Dora. The two of them are practically hoboes, but once they leave Rio life opens up for them. This shrewd, tough, and bighearted Brazilian movie, directed by Walter Salles, moves surely and convincingly from utter negation to something like guarded optimism. A great star in Brazil, Montenegro rivals such legendary actresses as Jeanne Moreau and Giulietta Masina in her ability to alter her moods from mask-of-tragedy woe to childish pleasure without apparent calculation. With handsome Vinicius de Oliveira as the boy and Marília Pêra as Dora's friendly neighbor. In Portuguese.—*D.D.* (11/30/98) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

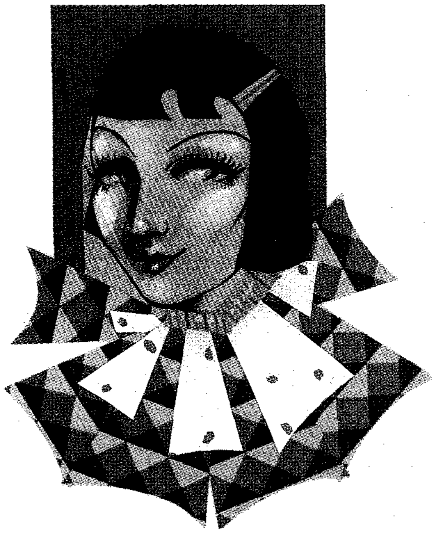
**Divorce Iranian Style**—Working with the anthropologist Ziba Mir-Hosseini, director Kim Longinotto offers a very fresh documentary peek at the Iranian divorce courts—a world whose rich human variety, bureaucracy, and outrageous sexism would test the descriptive powers of Dickens, Kafka, or Betty Friedan. Longinotto has the good taste to stay in the background; her subjects, such as a woman whose husband has forbidden her to answer the telephone for the past thirty years, are more than fascinating enough. In Farsi.—*Sarah Kerr* (Film Forum.)

**Elizabeth**—A grisly, flamboyant account of the Virgin Queen's early days as a monarch. Screenwriter Michael Hirst alters and conflates events that took place over many years—by degrees, Elizabeth (Cate Blanchett), a Protestant surrounded by powerful Catholics, takes control of England by pulling off a kind of internal coup d'état. The means of her ascension is Sir Francis Walsingham (Geoffrey Rush), a perfect Machiavellian character who serves the Queen as adviser, deadly assassin, and spy. Elizabeth's climb to power, however, is a personal disaster: the supple-waisted maiden with long red hair becomes stiff and harsh, emerging from her youth white-faced and trapped in the armor of a thick brocade dress. The movie is a horror film masquerading as a historical pageant. Directed by Shekhar Kapur.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

**Enemy of the State**—In this breathlessly paranoid Tony Scott thriller, a young Washington labor lawyer (Will Smith) unwittingly receives some incriminating evidence of wrongdoing by an official (Jon Voight) high up in the National Security Agency. The official wants it back. Despite much blather about the right to privacy, the movie is essentially an endless chase, in which Smith is pursued and spied on by vans, cameras, bugs, tape recorders, satellites, helicopters, computers, voice analyzers, humans, and two spotted owls. The movie goes like the wind, but it's more a technological exercise than anything else.—*D.D.* (84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Embassy 2, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Union Square.)

**Flying Down to Rio** (1933)—The romantic leads in this R.K.O. musical were the dark-eyed, incomparably beautiful Dolores Del Rio as a Brazilian aristocrat, the ultra-blond Gene

Raymond as an American who's smitten with her, and soulful Raul Roulien as her Brazilian fiancé. But it's famous for being the movie in which Ginger met Fred; they were intended for comic relief. Dazzlingly slender, sexy Ginger was the brash, good-natured vocalist for Raymond's band, and Fred was the accordionist. But when they cut loose on the dance floor and did the carioca, the glamorous triangle became an obstruction. The picture—which is almost surreally entertaining—is also famous for its madcap choreography: chorus girls dancing on the wings of planes, to the title song. Directed by Thornton Freeland.—*Pauline Kael* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Dec. 20.)



AMERICAN IN PARIS: *Claudette Colbert never looked more fetching than as Eve in Mitchell Leisen's magical farce "Midnight" (1939), written by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder. (It plays Dec. 19 in the "Power of Glamour" series at the American Museum of the Moving Image.) Her cheekbones are so high that they make her face appear triangular, and with those swirls of cloth which thirties women wore for hats and those dresses that set off her classic figure with epauletlike shoulders, she fits right into all the Art Deco around her. In "Midnight," this deft comedienne plays a chorine from Kokomo who arrives in Paris with hopes of becoming a café singer. She immediately falls in love with an émigré Hungarian cabdriver (Don Ameche) and into a high-society circle that accepts her as a Hungarian baroness. By the end, she's a self-made, American Cinderella who learns that though money is certainly nice, true lovers need no bank account.*

CORNELL RUBINO

**Gods and Monsters**—In the nineteen-fifties, the British-born director James Whale, who had lent depth and dignity to the horror film with "Frankenstein" and "Bride of Frankenstein," idled away his time, all but forgotten by the movie industry, in Pacific Palisades, California; eventually, he drowned in his pool. Bill Condon's elegant and tactful picture, based on Christopher Bram's novel "Father of Frankenstein," speculates on what might have happened in those final days. The inquiry draws fine performances from Ian McKellen as the dandyish Whale and from Brendan Fraser as his (wholly fictitious) gardener, Clayton Boone, with whom the older man becomes obsessed. With Lynn Redgrave as a Puritan housekeeper.—*A.L.* (11/9/98) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

**Life Is Beautiful**—Would that it were. The great, donkey-faced Italian clown Roberto Benigni attempts an ambitious fable of comedy's redemptive power. He plays an Italian Jew who keeps alive his little boy's innocence in a Nazi concentration camp by pretending that the routines of the camp are no more than an intricate game staged for his son's benefit. But Benigni's ironic counter-reality undermines this movie, not the Nazis, who were beyond ridicule for the same reason that they were beyond rationality. Totalitarianism makes the fantastic literal—that is its demonic appeal. Benigni's jokes and games just aren't enough, and you leave the movie thinking that what's touching is not Benigni's ministrations to the little boy but his own need to believe in comedy as salvation. With Giorgio Cantarini, who has the heartbreaking quality of the children in the old neorealist movies, as the boy. In Italian.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

**Little Murders** (1971)—Jules Feiffer's 1967 play was a wisp of a satirical comedy about the American adjustment to violence—to random sniper attacks and to assassinations. In this movie version, which Feiffer also wrote, and which was directed by Alan Arkin, the dialogue has comic authority, and there are some strong scenes of rabid farce, yet things keep going out of kilter and the humor slides into something ugly and slightly rancid. The film seems to be a collection of ideological points—it's pious about its anti-establishment attitudes. With Elliott Gould as the catatonic hero, a saintly dropout; Marcia Rodd, Vincent Gardenia, Elizabeth Wilson, and Arkin; and Donald Sutherland in a funny turn as an all-accepting minister.—*P.K.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Dec. 16.)

**Living Out Loud**—The sinews in Holly Hunter's neck and arms tighten like cables hauled in by a winch; she's all wired up, and in Richard LaGravenese's lovely comedy about loneliness in New York she uses the tension as a source of comedy. The movie hits an early high when Hunter, abandoned by her husband and alone in her Fifth Avenue co-op at night, runs through her fantasies and fears in a breathless internal whisper. Since she doesn't have to speak, Hunter does a rabbity, detailed facial commentary on what she's thinking. Based loosely on two Chekhov stories, the picture is about the ways that unlikely people reach out to one another, and it features a lyrical Manhattan, warmer than Woody Allen's, in which friends drop into their regular night club, chat, and listen to performers like Queen Latifah sing easy blues about the strange predicaments of life. With Danny DeVito, quiet for once, as a failure who hasn't given up hope.—*D.D.* (11/30/98) (Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.... ¶ 72nd Street East; through Dec. 17.)

**Meet Joe Black**—Martin Brest's new three-hour weepie is a loose rehash of Mitchell Leisen's 1934 "Death Takes a Holiday." Anthony Hopkins plays a media tycoon with a heart, and Claire Forlani plays his daughter, who is engaged to a dork in a good suit. She hopes for something better, and along it comes in the shape of Brad Pitt. He has the misfortune to die shortly afterward; Death then assumes Brad's body and arrives to claim the tycoon's soul and woo his daughter all over again. There are many unanswered questions here (why, for instance, does Pitt's Grim Reaper seem semi-retarded?), not to mention unintended spasms of comedy; in the end, however, they all get swallowed up in

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the mush.—*A.L.* (11/23/98) (Beekman, Lincoln Square, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

**Shakespeare in Love**—A romantic comedy about Will Shakespeare (Joseph Fiennes), who, in 1593, has writer's block. Also with Gwyneth Paltrow, Geoffrey Rush, and Colin Firth; directed by John Madden. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema I, and Lincoln Square.)

**The Siege**—New York is terrorized by Islamic militants. Bombs go off everywhere; casualties climb into the hundreds; no one can go *shopping*. "The Siege" offers an improbable set of circumstances and then gets all hot under the collar as it rejects the preposterous situation that it has set up. The filmmakers peddle fear and then try to claim the moral high ground; the treatment is foolish, confused, and borderline irresponsible. With Denzel Washington, Bruce Willis, Annette Bening, and Tony Shalhoub. Directed by Edward Zwick.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (Criterion Center, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 62nd & Broadway.)

**A Simple Plan**—A sturdy attempt to do a contemporary, snowbound "Treasure of the Sierra Madre." Three ordinary guys—a married college man who has settled into a routine job (Bill Paxton), his slightly woolly-brained brother (Billy Bob Thornton), and the town drunk and screwup (Brent Briscoe)—discover $4.4 million in a downed airplane lodged in the snow. What to do with the cash? The picture becomes a study of the nasty effects of greed and of the weakness of civilization's bonds. Director Sam Raimi, who once made shockers like "The Evil Dead," works seriously, but the story is fairly predictable, and the small-town, upper-Midwest locale is dreary and limited (we miss the gold-toothed Mexicans from "Treasure"). The movie leaves the unfortunate impression that the characters tear one another apart because there isn't much else to do. With Bridget Fonda as a scrupulous wife hit hard by the lure of big bucks. Screenplay by Scott B. Smith, based on his own novel.—*D.D.* (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

**Touch of Evil**—At first glance, little has changed in this restored version of Orson Welles's ornate thriller; the titles (and Henry Mancini's brassy theme) have disappeared from the celebrated opening shot, but from then on the basic thrust of this Mexican border tale (filmed in Venice, California) remains intact. We still have the manly Vargas (Charlton Heston) struggling to solve the case of the car bomb while his wife (Janet Leigh) feels the heat from a gang of local hoods; we are still thrown by the freakish cameos by Zsa Zsa Gabor and Mercedes McCambridge, and the horrific slaying—a kind of jazz strangulation—of the fleshly Grandi (Akim Tamiroff); and, of course, we still see Welles himself as police chief Hank Quinlan, looming over the action like a Falstaff gone to seed. If anything, the cuts and repairs make the work more fluid and less flamboyant; it was sometimes the studio, rather than Welles himself, which liked to go over the top. His scenes with brothel-keeper Marlene Dietrich have nothing to do with the plot and everything to do with the rotting heart of this amazing fable: the apotheosis of pulp.—*A.L.* (9/21/98) (Film Forum.)

**The Young Girls of Rochefort** (1968)—Jacques Demy's follow-up musical to "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" has a weird fatalistic buoyancy; either you float with it or the movie will drift right out of your head. It centers on twin sisters (Catherine Deneuve and Françoise Dorléac) and the men who glide through their mother's café. Demy tries to combine the knock-'em-dead jubilation of song-and-dance extravaganzas like "On the Town" with casual nuanced passages that reveal the melodic (and discordant) textures of everyday life. But this time out, the director's blend is less art than Cuisinart. And as good as it is to see Gene Kelly as an American in Rochefort, his presence only underlines the jarring hybrid nature of the movie. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (Florence Gould Hall; Dec. 22.)

## ALSO PLAYING

**BLADE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BRIDE OF CHUCKY:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE CELEBRATION:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **DANCING AT LUGHNASA:** First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square. . . . **HAPPINESS** (reviewed in our issue of 10/19/98): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas. . . . **HI LIFE:** The Screening Room. . . . **HOME FRIES:** Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square. . . . **THE IMPOSTORS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **I STILL KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER:** Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, and Union Square. . . . **LITTLE VOICE:** Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square. . . . **A NIGHT AT THE ROXBURY:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE OGRE:** Quad Cinema. . . . **PLEASANTVILLE:** Eastside Playhouse, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **PORT DJEMA:** Cinema Village. . . . **PSYCHO:** 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **RONIN** (10/5/98): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE RUGRATS MOVIE:** East 85th Street, Embassy 3, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **RUSHMORE** (12/7 & 12/14/98): Lincoln Square. . . . **SOLDIER:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **STAR TREK: INSURRECTION:** Astor Plaza, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **STEAM: THE TURKISH BATH:** Quad Cinema. . . . **VERY BAD THINGS:** First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, State, and Union Square.

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## REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

*(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)*

**FILM FORUM 2 AND 3,** W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**THEATRE 2:** Through Dec. 24: A new director's cut of "The Last Emperor" (1987, Bernardo Bertolucci).... **THEATRE 3:** "Touch of Evil" (†).

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART,** Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films from Brazil; all in Portuguese, with English subtitles. Dec. 17 at 2:30: "The Amulet of Ogum" (1974, Nelson Pereira dos Santos).... Dec. 17 at 6: "A Falecida" (1965, Leon Hirszman).... Dec. 18 at 2:30: "Carmen Miranda—Bananas Is My Business" (1995, Helena Solberg).... Dec. 18 at 6 and Dec. 22 at 2:30: "Inocência" (1983, Walter Lima, Jr.).... Dec. 18 at 8: "O Homem Que Virou Suco" (1980, João Batista de Andrade).... Dec. 19 at 2: "The Big City" (1966, Carlos Diegues and Leopold Serran).... Dec. 19 at 5: "Antonio das Mortes" (1969, Glauber Rocha).... Dec. 20 at 2: "Uirá, o Indio em Busca de Deus" (1974, Gustavo Dahl).... Dec. 20 at 5: "Our Indians" (1996, Silvio Back).... Dec. 21 at 2:30: "The Given Word" (1962, Anselmo Duarte).... Dec. 21 at 6: "All Nudity Shall Be Punished" (1973, Arnaldo Jabor).... Dec. 22 at 6: "The Conspirator" (1971, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade).... ¶ Dec. 18 at 6 and 8; Dec. 19 at 1, 3, and 5; Dec. 20 at 1 and 3; and Dec. 21-22 at 6: Several different programs of short films made at the Lodz Film School of Poland.

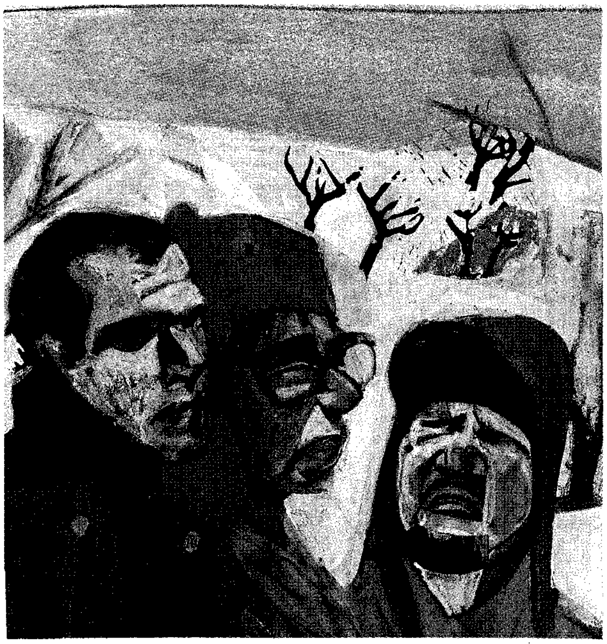
**WALTER READE THEATRE,** Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of recent Spanish films and a retrospective of films by Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón; all in Spanish, with English subtitles. Dec. 16 at 2 and 9:15 and Dec. 17 at 4 and 8:15: "The Heart of the Forest" (1979).... Dec. 16 at 4, Dec. 17 at 2 and 6:15, and Dec. 19 at 4:30: "Maravillas" (1981).... Dec. 18 at 2 and 6:30 and Dec. 19 at 9: "Torrente, the Silly Arm of the Law" (1998, Santiago Segura).... Dec. 18 at 4 and 8:30 and Dec. 19 at 6:30: "Airbag" (1997, Juanma Bajo Ulloa).... Dec. 20 at 2 and 8 and Dec. 21 at 6:15: "The Interior Scar" (1998, Pablo Llorca).... Dec. 20 at 4 and Dec. 21 at 4 and 8: "Do It for Me" (1997, Angel Fernandez Santos).... Dec. 20 at 6:15 and Dec. 21 at 2: "Train of Shadows" (1997, José Luis Guerin).... ¶ Dec. 16 at 6:30: "Little Murders" (†).... ¶ Dec. 19 at 11:30 and 2: "Heidi" (1937, Allan Dwan), with Shirley Temple.

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE,** 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Dec. 19 at 2: "Midnight" (†).... Dec. 19 at 4: "The Palm Beach Story" (1942, Preston Sturges), with Claudette Colbert.... Dec. 20 at 2: "Flying Down to Rio" (†).... Dec. 20 at 4: "Wonder Bar" (1934, Lloyd Bacon), with Dolores Del Rio.

**FLORENCE GOULD HALL,** 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Dec. 22 at 12:30 and 6:30: "The Young Girls of Rochefort" (†).... Dec. 22 at 2:30, 5:30, and 8:30: "Les Demoiselles Ont Eu 25 Ans" (1992, Agnès Varda; in French).

**A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE,** 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Dec. 20 at 7, the feature will be "I Want to Live!" (1958, Robert Wise), with Susan Hayward.

**ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES,** 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Dec. 16 at 7:30 and 9, Dec. 17 at 8 and 9:30, Dec. 18 at 8 and 10, Dec. 19 at 3 and 5, Dec. 20 at 7:15 and 9:15, and Dec. 22 at 7 and 9: "Hallelujah the Hills" (1963, Adolfas Mekas).... Dec. 18 at 7 and 9, Dec. 19 at 5 and 7, and Dec. 20 at 5: "A Poet on the Lower East Side" (1997, Marina Goldovskaya and Guyla Gazdog), with Allen Ginsberg.... Dec. 20 at 7 and 9 and Dec. 22 at 8 and 10: "Lena's Dreams" (1997, Heather Johnston and Gordon Eriksen).



*Bill Paxton, Billy Bob Thornton, and Brent Briscoe in Sam Raimi's "A Simple Plan."*

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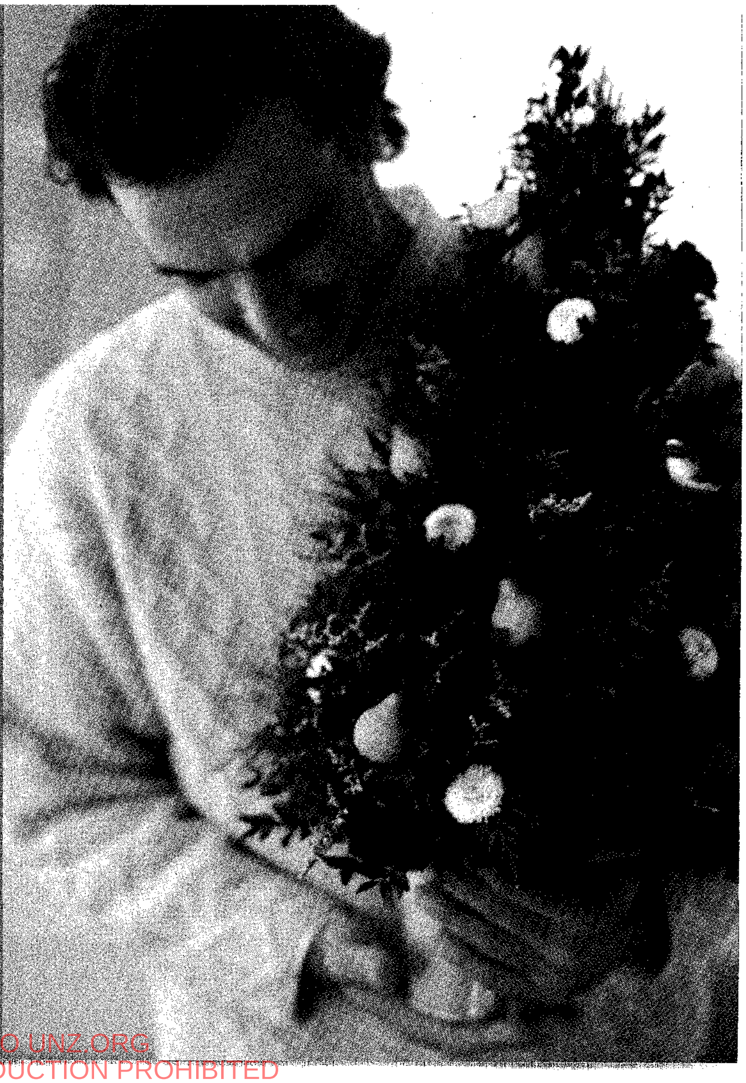

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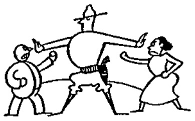
# THE NEW YORKER

# THE TALK OF THE TOWN

## COMMENT

*Unhappy families.*



ANY reporter who has covered the police beat and everyone who has gorged on prime-time crime shows can tell you with assurance that the average cop tends to react to a certain variety of "domestic disturbance" with eye-rolling contempt. The Bickersons are at it again. Grumbling all the way, the officer arrives at the domicile, steps around the broken crockery, and, over the zinging oaths and invectives, shouts for quiet. A hush descends on the household. Then, as long as there has been no bloodshed or felony, and the parties render their ritual promises to get along, the patrolman issues his homily and goes on his way. He will be back, of course. He will always be back. The war between the Bickersons will very likely never end.

So it goes with an eye-rolling American public and the domestic disturbance burned into the collective retina as "The Crisis in the White House." Just at the moment when we were all meant to be breaking out the party hats and blowers and celebrating the last ticks of the millennial clock, we sit slumped before the electronic hearth and witness the numbing dispute between two parties who are so steeped in long-held feelings of rage, betrayal, injury, and vengeance that they are willing to degrade everything around them and reduce us all to a more or less permanent state of contempt. The broken crockery at everyone's feet is the law, the language, the Constitution.

This impeachment fight, with its immutable hellward momentum, resembles nothing so much as the totemic domestic war sparked by the weaselly and little-trusted husband who is finally caught dead-to-rights; there's lipstick on his collar and the acrid stink of perfume and cigarette smoke on his tweeds. The stuff of O'Hara, Cheever, and *Playboy* cartoons. The spouse—and we mean the congressional Republicans, not Hillary Clinton—is herself of dubious history and intentions. Her pious declarations to sit in fair judgment are hollow. There is a ring of satisfaction in her righteous fury. The heedless husband, of course, admits to nothing at first. He lies, flat out. This is as routine as it is pathetic. The lipstick is "uh, nothing, maybe some laundry mark or something," and the perfume and the smoke are evidence merely of an innocent drink at a bar with the boys.

But it ain't working—not this time. The spouse spends endless time and countless resources to shake out the evidence. As it happens, the husband is utterly found out: there are tapes; the mistress confides in a duplicitous friend; there is further unlaundered evidence. There is, finally, no choice. The slump-shouldered husband apologizes—badly at the start, then more firmly, more clearly, first with a bitten lip, now with a catch in his throat. He prays. He seeks the counsel of clergy. He sleeps on the couch. Before an entire nation, he sleeps on the couch.

"I'm sorry," he keeps saying.

"No!" comes the glacial answer. "Sorry's not good enough!"

Meanwhile, the children (that's us) are fed up and bruised. We always knew Dad had a wandering eye, but we assumed that those days were gone. We are furious for a while, but now we've had enough. Divorce would be catastrophic, and it must not happen; the rounds of charge and counter-charge, the demands and new forms of apology, have become unbearable. The squabbling is ruining dinner, ruining our lives. It's more unbearable, even, than the recklessness that set it all off. *Mom! Dad! Please! Cut it out!*

Nearly all concerned are ready to forgive and forget—not least the real wife rather than the metaphorical one. And so we are left here, in that most familiar of tragic domestic scenes, the one in which sorry is not enough and conciliation seems impossible. It is a war of twenty-five years. It is the question of all domestic dispute: Can you forgive him?

—DAVID REMNICK

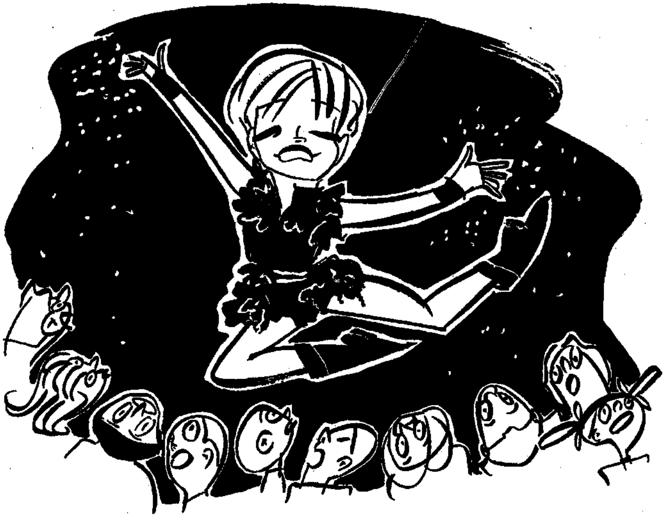
ILLUSTRATION BY LAURENT CILLUFFO

## THE BOARDS

*It takes a sprinkling of fairy dust to wake up a holiday-weary crowd.*

The sellout house of parent-kid combos elbowing into the sixteen-hundred-seat Marquis Theatre at a recent matinée of the musical "Peter Pan"—starring Cathy Rigby as the boy who wouldn't grow up—looked like a relatively subdued holiday crowd. Tired mothers at the theatre's bar bought pre-curtain Cokes for their kids and just about immediately told them sternly, "Stop drinking so much; you'll have to go to the bathroom." Stall venders hawked "Peter Pan" souvenirs: posters autographed by Rigby ($20); plastic swords that light up with AA batteries ($7); "Never Grow Up" sweatshirts ($40).

Pre-curtain comment from a little boy to his father: "I thought it would be a video." Father: "It's not exactly a video." Mother to a restless little boy kicking his heels on the bottom of his seat: "Look, there's the orchestra pit, and the orchestra is in it." Boy: "Why?" Mother: "So they won't get in the way of the actors on the stage." Explanation of ambivalence from a hard-eyed woman standing with a couple of boys eating Skittles. "I don't know anything about Peter Pan. I'm here for a benefit for Mount Sinai," she said. "I brought my boys and my mother. It's a mother-daughter bonding thing."



*Cathy Rigby as Peter Pan*

The curtain went up. Whispered laments were heard in the audience about benefit-seat placement ("I thought I'd be closer for a two-hundred-dollar seat"). Onstage, the Darling family, with their big dog, Nana, made their entrances in the Nursery: three ideal children—Wendy, John, and Michael—in ideal nightclothes, dancing and longing for parental affection; their beautiful mother dressed to go out to a dinner party; their tuxedoed father confounded by his bow tie. The audience stared up at them and their big dog. Sir James Barrie's story moved along. By the end of Act I, when Peter Pan got the three Darling children to fly away with him to Neverland, the audience rose quickly. Lights up. But nobody in the aisles looked or felt much like the Darlings yet. One man told another, "We're going to 'The Lion King' tomorrow. We got the tickets a year ago." The other man replied, "I can't get my kids to go to 'The Wizard of Oz.' "

Act II. Neverland. Much talk from Peter Pan's men, the Lost Boys, about wanting a mother. Not much stirring from mothers or kids in the audience. Soon, the operatically evil Captain Hook was getting a few boos and a few laughs, though not from the bonding mother and daughter. But when the time came for the audience to help resuscitate Tinker Bell, who had selflessly swallowed the poison intended for Peter Pan, everybody took the cue and responded: heartened, moms and dads and grandparents and kids and babysitters clapped and clapped their hands to show that they still believed in fairies. At last! Interactivity! The Darling children onstage were reunited with their parents, and that seemed to be just fine with the audience. Then, of course, came the clincher, with the indefatigably gymnastic Cathy Rigby swooping right out above the audience and sprinkling fistfuls of fairy dust over everybody. With Rigby dangling on her cable above them, the audience looked up, bug-eyed, shaken, alive. Ninety-four years after Peter Pan was created, the fairy dust still worked. As the curtain fell, kids charged up the aisle brandishing their plastic swords. Mothers smiled and didn't yell at them.

"No play ever gets to me, but this one really did," said the grandmother who was bonding with her hard-eyed daughter. —LILLIAN ROSS

## WIND ON CAPITOL HILL

*Ivy Day in the Committee Room.*

My testimony in the President's defense before the Judiciary Committee is over, and the reviews are in. "Gratuitously patronizing," "tone-deaf," "condescending"—the *Times.* David Broder, of the Washington *Post,* blasts me for my "arrogance." And then there is Michael Powell, also in the *Post,* who complains about my "peachy skin" and my "once modish haircut." Hey, I paid thirty dollars for that haircut!

Being a historian, I've tried to console myself by taking the long view. After all, Abraham Lincoln sometimes got a bad review. On the other hand, John Wilkes Booth sometimes got raves. And yet I must face the reality that my testimony may be remembered, if it is remembered at all, as a colossal flop, the political equivalent of "Moose Murders."

I had no idea last Tuesday that things would come to this. Walking into Room 2141 of the Rayburn House Office Building that morning to testify, I noticed the large portrait of Peter Rodino that hangs above the committee members' seats. It's not a distinguished rendition of Rodino, but who cared about art at a moment like this? I preferred to think of it as a good-luck charm, placed there by Providence to ward off evil spirits.

I was on a panel of experts which included no women, and, as I looked down the row of us, the unflattering phrase "all the President's men" came to mind. Then and there I should have known that the Rodino talisman was less than reliable.

I had diligently watched the earlier hearings on C-SPAN, so the committee

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

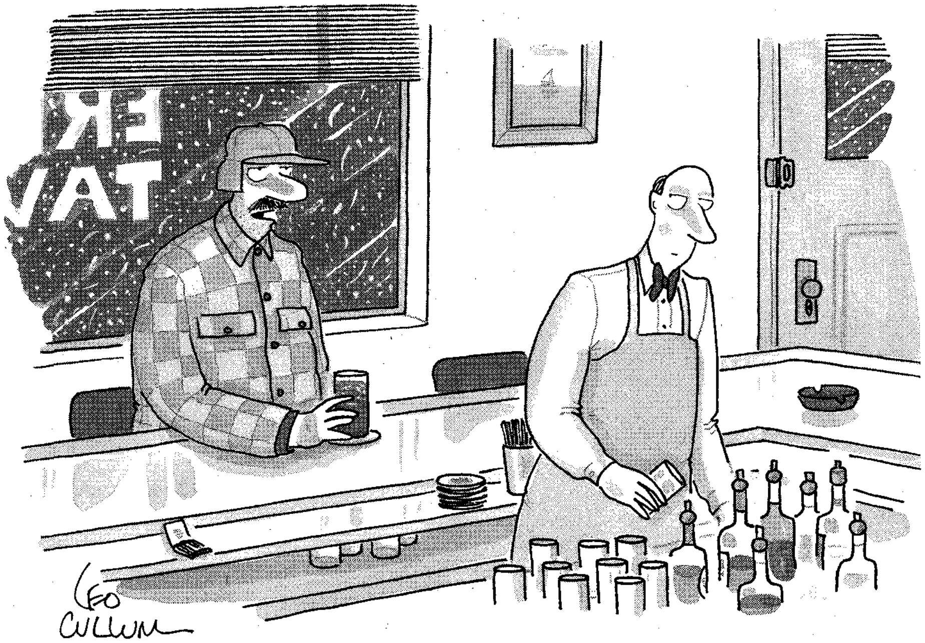
members looked familiar. In person, though, the Republicans seemed less scary than they had on TV. Unfortunately, the Democrats looked a good deal more relaxed, which is not exactly what you hope for when you're doing what I was about to do.

The hearing began, its solemnity broken only by a small din of clicking cameras every time the first witness, President Clinton's special counsel Gregory Craig, raised his index finger photogenically at the ceiling. In time, I gave my statement, furiously cutting and pasting my planned remarks in order to finish before the dreaded red light in front of me flashed. After coaxing an extra minute from Chairman Hyde, I began to relax, figuring that I had done my bit for posterity. The feeling didn't last long.

Fielding questions from the Judiciary Committee members reminded me of playing baseball as a kid. When some batters were up, I couldn't wait to show my stuff. Hit it to me, I'd think. Hit it to me. When other batters were up, though, I'd think differently. So it went as the questioning moved from Democrats (Hit it to me!) to Republicans (Hit it to *him!* Hit it to Katzenbach! To Ackerman!).

There were some lighter moments, the best coming when one of my fellow-witnesses, Sam Beer, recalled how a cocktail party had delayed his response to the White House's invitation to testify. Everyone laughed, with maybe a subconscious urge, although it was early, to grab a drink. Yet, despite the levity, I was becoming aware that remarks I had made about cravenness and zealotry had not endeared me to the Majority members. Stuck in my baseball metaphor, I realized that some of the congressmen wanted to hit me, not the ball.

But it wasn't all that terrible. After a Republican from Tennessee, Bill Jenkins, and I finished a spirited verbal sparring match, we looked at each other off camera and winked, as if to say it had been fun, no hard feelings. By twenty past one, more than three hours into the hearing, I began to give out from hunger. Fortunately, the hearings, too, were winding down. Chairman Hyde closed the proceedings with some cutting remarks about Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., but I was too famished to protest.



*"May I have a tiny umbrella in this, Ernie? I'm on vacation."*

• •

Leaving the room, I took one last look at Rodino's portrait, and silently said thank you. Things could have been worse in the committee room that day. Alas, the coming days were almost certain to see worse. —SEAN WILENTZ

## CHRISTMAS PAST

*Songs of the season evoke a simpler time.*

ORANGES and peppermint candy, fruitcake long in the making but swift enough in the eating, with a little Bourbon whiskey poured over it. A chill in the air, if not the snow of dreams, and the dusty whiffs, at that woebegone time, of soft coal burning in the grate—this was Kentucky long ago, when we sat with our father at the upright piano and each night of Christmas week sang the hymns and the old songs of Christmas, many with their dog-trot rhymes of bed and head, night and bright.

Later, in New York, I collected Christmas records, and each year I play them. The most beautiful are the oldest: Caruso singing "Cantique de Noël" in 1916, before electrical recording, and reclaimed in early mono LPs. In spite of the great tenor's range and notable volume, what we know as "O Holy Night" seems to come from a distance, from the star in the East, a pastoral world in antiquity—or perhaps it's only the hum and scratch of the twenty-six-year-old album, "A Golden Age Christmas." Eliot's poem on the Magi begins, "A cold coming we had of it," and the sentiment is not alien to "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht" as sung by the matchless contralto Ernestine Schumann-Heink, in a tempo slower than that heard in the churches. She brings to the rather banal hymn a gravity and solemnity that might, if you like, foretell the strange future of the babe in the crib. My recordings of Christmas hymns sung by Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Joan Sutherland, and others possess a jubilate accent indeed appropriate for a time of celebration, but not more fitting than the long-dead voices of a simpler, less opulent, and less spendthrift time.

In the notes to the old recording, I learned that during the twenties and thirties the tenor Giovanni Martinelli would rise up in the choir loft at St. Patrick's Cathedral during the Midnight Mass to sing, without previous announcement, "Gesù Bambino." What reciprocity can be imagined here? Perhaps the ring of a few coins tossed in the poor box.

—ELIZABETH HARDWICK

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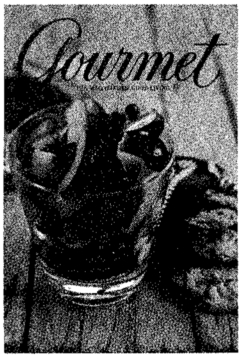

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## DEPT. OF SKULDUGGERY

*The untold story of a politico turned spy.*

ONCE upon a time, an American who chose to spy for the Soviet Union would have done so on principle. No self-respecting spook would have stooped to trade national secrets for cash. Yet the recent release of certain Soviet intelligence records reveals that at least one pragmatist thrived in the thirties and forties: Samuel Dickstein, a man whose monetary demands so exasperated the Soviets that the N.K.V.D. (the predecessor of the K.G.B.) assigned him the code name Crook.

One of the most remarkable facts about Dickstein the spy is that he was also Dickstein the congressman. Even more interesting, Dickstein, who for eleven terms served the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where he grew up, is best remembered for his energetic efforts to create the investigative body that evolved into the House Committee on Un-American Activities. In an authoritative 1968 study of the committee, Walter Goodman wrote, "If any man deserves the title of Father of the Committee, it is Representative Dickstein."

Dickstein was born into a Jewish family in Lithuania in 1885 and immigrated to the United States with his parents when he was six. In 1922, he won a Democratic seat in the House of Representatives, and by the mid-thirties he had begun investigating the existing network of pro-Nazi and Fascist groups in the United States. It was this work that led to the creation of a continuing committee to investigate "un-American" activities.

According to N.K.V.D. files, in December of 1937 Dickstein called on Alexander Troyanovsky, the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, to offer his services in providing information on an alleged band of "Russian Fascists living in the U.S." Dickstein offered to infiltrate the group, but to do so "he would need five to six thousand dollars." Both Troyanovsky and N.K.V.D. agents in Washington were interested in Dickstein's proposal, but they were also skeptical. An N.K.V.D. operative known as Igor, who was assigned to negotiate with Dickstein, had no difficulty with the notion of paying the Congressman for information. Soon, however, the two began to disagree, often vehemently, about the price.

After one such argument, Peter Gutzeit, the N.K.V.D. station chief, drafted several notable memos to Moscow, one of which recommended broadening the scope of "our work here in the field of big politics." Gutzeit urged his superiors not only to authorize the thousands needed annually to maintain Dickstein on the payroll but also "to throw to him a round sum for [his] reëlection campaign." Moscow approved this proposal and expanded it to include the funding of American journalists.

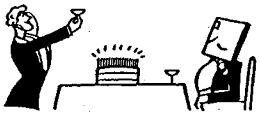
Unfortunately for Dickstein, it is probable that Gutzeit's ambitious scheme was soon abandoned. Stalin's purges were well under way, and in the fall of 1938 Gutzeit was recalled to Moscow, where he was imprisoned and later executed. By this time, according to the N.K.V.D. records, Moscow had begun to view Dickstein as a "danger," because he was "a mercenary of many intelligence services." Nevertheless, he continued to pass along to the N.K.V.D. information about Fascist organizations in the United States. In September of 1938, at the N.K.V.D.'s urging, he agreed to denounce HUAC for focussing on Communist groups and their allies, even though he believed that doing so might negatively affect his reëlection effort. According to a June, 1939, memo to Moscow from the N.K.V.D. in New York, Dickstein had already delivered "materials on the war budget for 1940, records of conferences of the budget sub-commission, reports of the war minister, chief of staff and etc."

In 1940, Dickstein and the N.K.V.D. finally severed relations. Dickstein served in Congress for five more years, and in 1945 he ran successfully for the New York State Supreme Court, where he served until his death, in 1954. His brief adventure in the spy trade was apparently never discovered. In summing up Dickstein's career, Walter Goodman wrote, "No cause took more of his energies or his passions than the creation of a committee to investigate subversive activities," and he added that Dickstein "had the rest of his life to regret it."

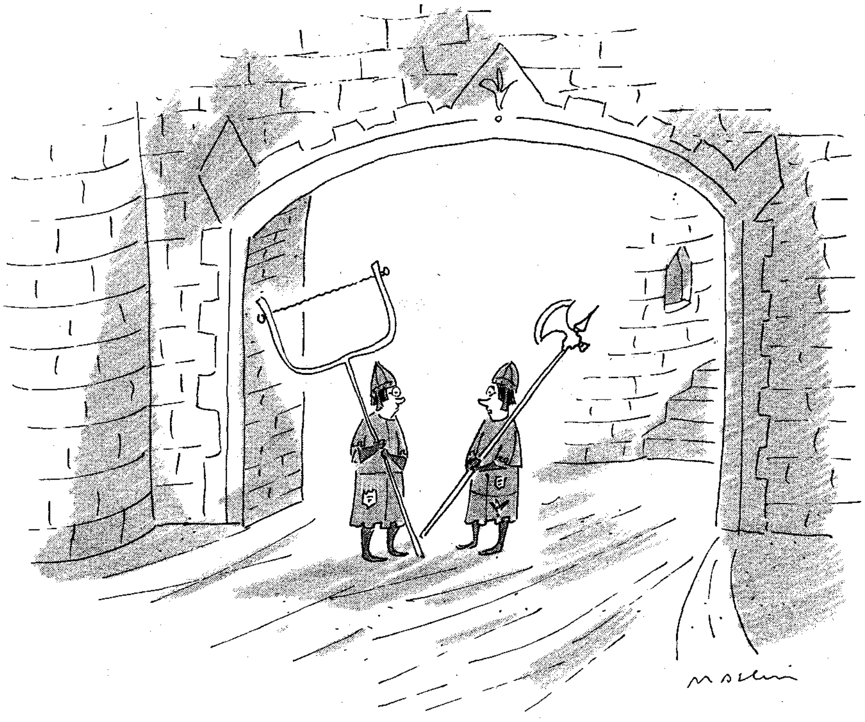
—ALLEN WEINSTEIN AND
ALEXANDER VASSILIEV

## NERDFILE

*The world was invited to Noam Chomsky's virtual birthday party.*

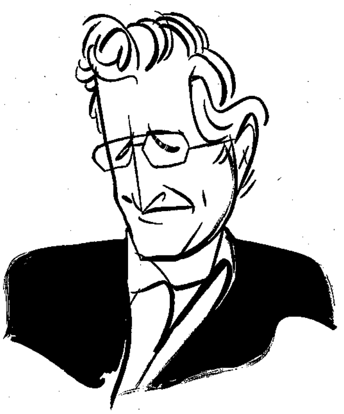


IN recent months, friends of Noam Chomsky, the linguist and social critic, were wondering how to mark his seventieth birthday, which fell on December 7th. The



"*What you want to be holding is a halberd. What you've got there is an adjustable cheese slicer.*"

usual academic tribute, a Festschrift, didn't seem quite sufficient. "You have to think, who shall we invite to contribute," Jay Keyser, a retired M.I.T. linguist, explained a few weeks before Chomsky's big day. "With someone of Noam's stature, it would turn into the Encyclopaedia Britannica."



*Noam Chomsky*

So Keyser and a colleague from CUNY, Janet Fodor, came up with an alternative: a tribute Web site. "You want a vehicle that is infinitely expandable, and that is what the Internet is," Keyser said. The Celebration Project, established earlier this year at http://mitpress.mit.edu/celebration, invited all comers to contribute essays and salutations. "My view was that this would be just the way Noam would like it," Keyser said. "You don't go to an élite group—you open it up to anybody who would care to say anything."

The organizers initially decided not to alert Chomsky's obvious peers and acolytes to the existence of the Web site, hoping that potential contributors would simply browse their way into its precincts. The openness of the project made for some entries that probably would not have passed muster in a more conventional academic publication. From Israel came a linguistic analysis of Robert Frost's poem "The Birches," arguing that it "extolls the virtue of enticing young virgins to sexual activity." ("The Germanic word BiRCH sounds somewhat like the Latin word ViRGin," the writer explained, helpfully.) One Chomsky fan admitted that posting a greeting "kinda made me feel like a groupie sending a card to his or her favorite rock-and-roll star," while another, from Slovenia, gushed, "It is the greatness of that man and the brightness of his brain and the baldness of his ideas and the fruitness of his domain that make us admire him."

In all, there were a hundred and ninety-five contributions to the site. Among the more well-established academic voices taking part was that of the linguist Ray Jackendoff, who contributed "Some Things I Learned from Noam." ("Colorless green ideas sleep furiously. They really do.") Steven Pinker, the author of "The Language Instinct," wrote, "As a teenager I decided to study cognitive science after reading an article about the Chomskyan revolution in the New York *Times Magazine*, and, ever since then, practically all of my research and writing has been trying to answer questions you have posed." Pinker said last month that the understated nature of the project (it was kept secret from Chomsky, and, on his birthday, a red folder bound with a gold ribbon was left quietly on his desk) suited its subject perfectly. "He doesn't go in for ceremony," Pinker said. "Though I don't want to say that he has a small ego—he is always a hundred per cent certain that he has been, is, and will be right about everything. He is not a modest man in that sense, but he is a modest man in the sense of promoting himself."

Speaking by telephone from his home two days after his birthday, Chomsky told me, "The truth of it is that my wife had to explain to me what was going on. But when I figured it out I was overwhelmed." (He has since been reading the contributions on paper, since he doesn't access the Internet.)

"When I was a kid, my mother used to arrange a surprise party every year for me, and I never figured it out," he went on. "I was always completely surprised, and it was the same in this case. It is apparently in the genes."

—Rebecca Mead

## EYE OF THE STORM DEPT.

*A visit with John Podesta.*

The aura of unreality that surrounds the impeachment hearings elsewhere in the country is even more pronounced at the White House. The Marine Guard, with his striped trousers and ramrod posture, stands as respectfully as ever at the entrance to the West Wing, signalling that the President is in the Oval Office. Inside, the gleaming chandeliers and the Christmas trees seem festive—almost. But the usually hushed corridors are disturbed by a nasal drone, the sound of the televised congressional hearings describing humiliating details of the President's sexual behavior, taking aim at him phrase by phrase.

Presiding over this cognitive dissonance, from the same vast corner office that H. R. Haldeman occupied during the days of Watergate, is Clinton's fourth chief of staff, John D. Podesta. He has close-cropped hair, like Haldeman's, and an occasional temper, which has inspired colleagues to whisper, on particularly bad days, that his "evil twin Skippy" has taken his place. Unlike Haldeman, though, Podesta has a wit dark enough to accommodate the absurdities of the current political moment.

The post Podesta holds has never been an easy one, but nothing could have prepared him for watching Congress move to impeach his boss. Sitting at a giant Chippendale conference table last week, he explained his rules of survival. "You have to try to slow down the chaos, draw in the energy, get a set of people managing the issue," he says. "And"—with a nod toward the Oval Office, down the hall—"not make more mistakes than what got you into trouble in the first place."

The way Podesta talks about Clinton these days, the President sounds almost like a bystander to his own political destiny. Of course, Clinton is following the proceedings closely, and talking with his legal advisers regularly, but, Podesta says, "he really has gone to a place where he thinks that if he puts his energy into doing his job... It's his way of both atoning for what he did and dealing with the current crisis." While his advisers argued over whether further public apologies from Clinton would help or hurt, the President resorted to making a couple of delicate phone calls to wavering House members, well aware that, under the circumstances, Johnsonian arm-twisting could backfire. "To the extent that members would want to hear from him, he'd be available," Podesta said, "but this isn't like trying to get votes for a budget resolution. He's not phone-banking the Hill."

When Podesta was named chief of staff, press accounts noted his passion for roller-coasters. It seemed the perfect preparation for his new job. But, he says, he has learned that there is one major difference. When you're at the amusement park, "it's socially acceptable to scream."

—Jane Mayer

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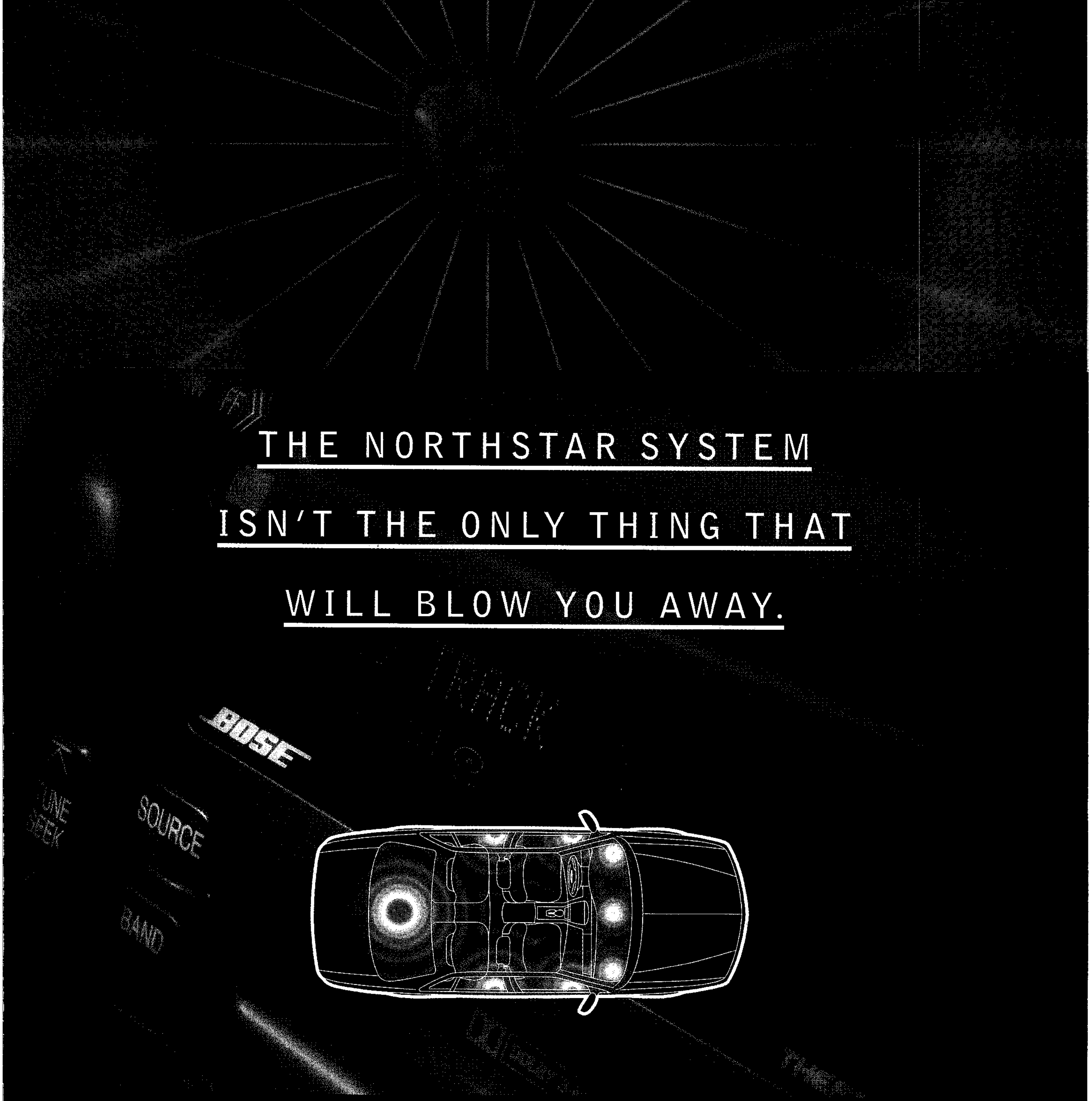

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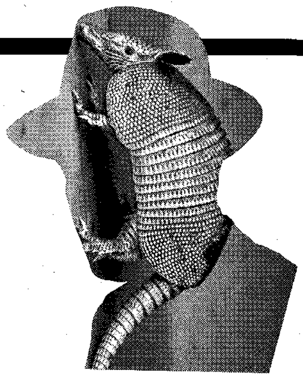

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ANNALS OF LAW

# THE JESTER

*There was some wisdom in William Ginsburg's performance.*

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

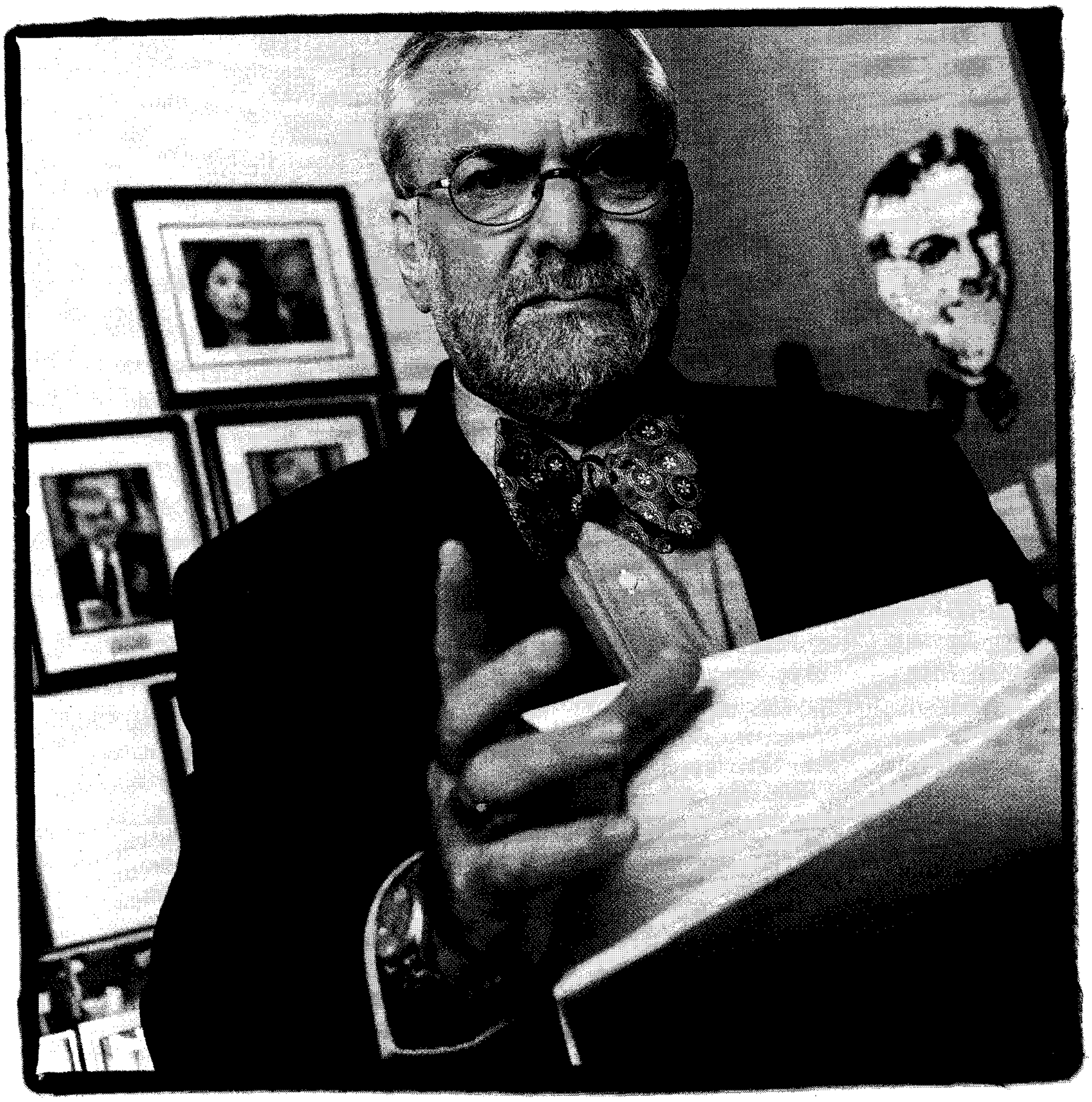
IN the weeks before the House Judiciary Committee finally voted, along party lines, to approve articles of impeachment against President Clinton, the tone of the deliberations was often marked by a certain desperate solemnity. Republicans and Democrats alike steered away from the gamy details of the misbegotten White House romance between the President and Monica Lewinsky and toward weightier matters. "Have you been to Auschwitz?" Henry Hyde, the committee chairman, suddenly asked during a session on the law of perjury. "Do you see what happens when the rule of law doesn't prevail?" This was an instance, perhaps, of the chairman's reach for meaning—and it was quite a reach—exceeding his grasp. Given the rhetorical hazards of history, a safer course was to stick to theology. When Representative George Gekas, Republican of Pennsylvania, questioned whether Father Robert Drinan, S.J., a former congressman who had served on the committee during the Watergate era, really felt that some Republicans might be motivated by a search for vengeance, Drinan replied, "I'll leave God to judge that." A few moments later, Steve Buyer, Republican of Indiana, reminded Drinan, "You'll be accountable also to the Lord."

Oddly, one of the hearings' least pompous moments occurred during the testimony of the independent counsel himself, Kenneth Starr, on November 19th. Starr was being questioned by Clinton's lawyer David Kendall. Kendall asked about an allegation made by William Ginsburg, Lewinsky's onetime attorney, that Starr's staff had asked Lewinsky to make secret tape recordings of the President. "Mr. Ginsburg is wrong," Starr told the committee, and he added, "Mr. Ginsburg was not known for his consistency of articulating positions." Few people in the real world would have found the remark funny, but everyone in this Washington hearing room—Republicans, Democrats, staffers, journalists—got a kick out it. Starr's joke involved little more than the name itself—*Gins*-burg, as Starr pronounced it. Ginsburg had represented Lewinsky from January to June of this year, and during that period he had stood at the epicenter of the scandal, yet by the time the committee had begun deliberating he was remembered only as an amusing diversion.

In the final evaluation of the scandal, though, Ginsburg will almost surely loom larger than he does today. If he mangled his role as a public spokesman—a business associate describes him as "an ego with a digestive system"—he also did a better job for his client than he is generally given credit for. It was Ginsburg's performance, clownish though it was, that established the essential triviality of the scandal. Indeed, Ginsburg's epitaph might come straight out of Monty Python: "I may be an idiot, but I'm no fool."

WHEN I tried to reach Ginsburg by phone in early November, my call was returned by one of his law partners, Harvey Oringher, speaking from Los Angeles, where the firm of Ginsburg, Stephan, Oringher & Richman has its offices. "Frankly, we feel that Bill has done enough interviews," Oringher told me. "This has not been a very happy experience for this firm, and it's been painful for Bill. He's had more than enough exposure." Ultimately, I did persuade Oringher to let me speak to Ginsburg, but when I went to Los Angeles to see him Oringher served as a kind of chaperon for some of our time together.

The gingerly treatment illustrated how much had changed since last winter. Ginsburg hadn't had a keeper in those days, much as he had seemed at times to need one. Ginsburg, who is just short of his fifty-sixth birthday, has now returned to trying medical-malpractice and other civil cases at his quietly successful firm of about forty lawyers. But



*"An ego with a digestive system": Ginsburg's greediness for attention obscured his actual role in the case. Photograph by Fergus Greer.*

last winter, at a moment when the news media had an insatiable appetite for Lewinskiana, the bearded and bespectacled attorney achieved an almost unprecedented ubiquity. On February 1st, he even made a dubious bit of television history by appearing on all five major Sunday-morning talk shows. He loved his moment of fame, and made no effort to hide how happily he was basking in the attention of the grandees of electronic journalism. Even now, months after the stars lost interest in him, Ginsburg still pines for them. "Mike Wallace is like a father to me," he told me. "Barbara, Wolf, and Cokie kept me sane."

For more than twenty years, Ginsburg has represented a small group of San Fernando Valley oncological radiologists whose director is Bernard Lewinsky, Monica's father. On the afternoon of January 16th, Dr. Lewinsky paged Ginsburg while he was making a court appearance in Santa Monica. Lewinsky thought of Ginsburg (who has had minimal experience in criminal law) as a friend as much as he thought of him as a lawyer.

"Bernie said, 'I've got to see you right away. Get down to the Biltmore fast,'" Ginsburg told me as we sat in his eighth-floor office overlooking the Los Angeles Country Club. "He wouldn't tell me what it was about, so the first thing I thought about was my wife and kids. As it happened, two of them were on planes that day, and I thought there might have been a plane crash. Bernie is the kind of close friend who would tell me news like that. So as I drove downtown to the hotel I didn't even turn on the radio, because I didn't want to hear. When I saw him, I practically fell into his arms. The first thing he said was 'Monica's in some kind of trouble.' I knew she worked at the Pentagon, so I thought it might be espionage, selling secrets—something like that."

Bernard Lewinsky had invited Ginsburg to speak that night to a radiologists' conference that was taking place at the Biltmore, so they now commandeered one of its rooms. "Bernie told me Monica might be involved with the President of the United States. When I heard that, I got a couple of drinks from the minibar," Ginsburg went on. "He said she was with the F.B.I. even as we spoke. Bernie and I thought we might be tapped ourselves, so we started walking the halls as we were talking." The two men migrated to the Jonathan Club, a few blocks away, where Ginsburg called the room at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, outside Washington, where Monica was being interrogated by Michael Emmick, one of Starr's prosecutors. "They didn't want me to talk to her," Ginsburg told me. "They asked me, 'How do I know you're her lawyer?' I said, 'Because, God damn it, I tell you I'm her lawyer!'" (Ginsburg's stories abound in colorful but unconfirmable detail.) Of course, Ginsburg did get to speak with his client that night.

Ginsburg's conversation with Emmick opened the central narrative line of the first six months of the case: Would Lewinsky coöperate with Starr? Ginsburg says (and Lewinsky has testified) that at the meeting in the Ritz-Carlton the prosecutors asked her to tape-record conversations with Clinton, Vernon Jordan, and others. (Although Starr denied making such a request, he admitted that his prosecutors discussed "consensual monitoring" with Lewinsky "at a high level of generality.") Ginsburg backed Lewinsky's refusal to do any taping—"I told them I thought it was un-American," Ginsburg says—and the lawyer and the prosecutors could not agree on an immunity deal for Lewinsky that day. Eventually, Emmick let Lewinsky go home (Ginsburg says that he told her simply to walk out), and the following morning Ginsburg took the first flight to Washington.

Shortly afterward, Ginsburg asked his client to write an account of her relationship with the President. She did so, and Ginsburg used what she had written as a "proffer" to the prosecutors of what she would say if they gave her immunity. Now working with a respected Washington defense lawyer named Nathaniel Speights, Ginsburg gave the document—it amounted to ten pages—to Starr's staff on January 31st. "Ms. Lewinsky had an intimate and emotional relationship with President Clinton beginning in 1995," Monica wrote in a text that drifts between first and third person. "At various times between 1995 and 1997, Ms. Lewinsky and the President had physically intimate contact. This included oral sex, but excluded intercourse.... Neither the Pres. nor Mr. Jordan (or anyone on their behalf) asked or encouraged Ms. L to lie."

But the prosecutors refused to give Lewinsky immunity unless she gave them a verbal proffer as well as a written one. "There is no substitute for looking a witness in the eye," Starr (who has never met Lewinsky) explained in a statement responding to comments Ginsburg made in February. Ginsburg wouldn't agree. He and Speights dealt almost exclusively with Starr's deputies, but one day in the prosecutors' offices, Ginsburg says, he found himself in the men's room with the independent counsel. According to Ginsburg, they introduced themselves—"Call me Ken," "Call me Bill"—and then Ginsburg pleaded with Starr to leave his client alone. "Why are you doing this? What the hell is this about?" he asked. But Starr deferred to what he has always called his "career prosecutors," and Ginsburg, fearful that Lewinsky's story would be unsatisfactory to them, persisted in demanding immunity up front. The stakes of Ginsburg's gamble were clear. He was taking the risk that Starr's office would indict his client. And he seemed to be goading Starr into doing just that.

*"He knows when you are sleeping. He knows when you're awake."*

ON February 2nd, the Washington *Post* ran a front-page story with the headline "AS GINSBURG BROADCASTS, COLLEAGUES AIR THEIR DISBELIEF." Quoting prominent Washington lawyers, the story criticized Ginsburg's television appearances, questioned his attacks on Starr, and portrayed him as seriously out of his depth. The *Post* story also contained one of two quotes for which Ginsburg remains notorious: "I'm the most famous person in the world." Ginsburg regards the printing of this quote as a cheap shot, because he asserts that he said it sarcastically, in response to a remark Senator Trent Lott had made on the set of "Larry King Live." He stands by his other celebrated quip, however, which was that he'd kissed Lewinsky's *pulkes*—a Yiddish word meaning inner thighs—when she was an infant. "Anybody who criticizes that comment doesn't have children," Ginsburg told me. "Anybody who is between zero and two years old, I will kiss their *pulkes.*"

Now, months later, it's hard to remember the intensity of that moment in Washington. Lewinsky was said to be at the center of a criminal conspiracy involving perjury, obstruction of justice, witness tampering, and even the payment of hush money. The fact is, though, that there were only two serious allegations against her: that she might have submitted a false affidavit in the Paula Jones case and that she might have urged Linda Tripp to lie in the famous "talking points." But it seems clear now that, despite all the fevered speculation, Lewinsky committed no crime.

Unquestionably, Lewinsky signed an affidavit that said, "I have never had a sexual relationship with the President," but there is every reason to believe that she regarded the statement as true. (A perjury conviction requires intentional falsehood.) The Tripp tapes, in their inimitable rambling style, make a convincing case in Lewinsky's defense. For example, in a tape from October, 1997, two months before Lewinsky was subpoenaed in the Jones case, she mentions in passing that she has had sex with a total of eight men. "Well," Tripp says. "I guess you can count the big creep in a sort of half-assed way."

"Not at all," Lewinsky replies. "I never even came close to sleeping with him."

"Why, because you were standing up?"

"We didn't have sex, Linda! Not—we didn't have sex."

"Well, what do you call it?"

"We fooled around. . . . Having sex is having intercourse."

Tripp tries to talk her jaded young friend into admitting that oral sex counts as sex, explaining, "If you get to orgasm, that's having sex."

If so, Lewinsky replies, "then I've had sex with a lot more people."

"You mean it's less personal to give a [word deleted] job than to have intercourse?"

"No, not necessarily," Lewinsky replies. "Sometimes. It depends."

"I guess it depends."

"It really depends."

"Yeah," Tripp concludes. "I'm getting an education late in life."

As for the talking points, they were said be the product of a cabal that might have included Lewinsky, Jordan, the Clinton aide Bruce Lindsey, and even the President himself. But the evidence likewise suggests that neither Lewinsky nor anyone else committed any crime in connection with them. Tripp had been subpoenaed in the Jones case, and the three pages of typed notes consist of Lewinsky's advice to Tripp on what she should say in an affidavit about her dealings with Kathleen Willey, the former White House volunteer who had accused the President of groping her in the Oval Office. Lewinsky advises Tripp to say that when she saw Willey shortly after the alleged incident Willey, far from complaining, seemed "very happy." That, too, is innocuous; Tripp testified that Willey flirted incessantly with Clinton, not vice versa. Lewinsky also tells Tripp to say that Willey "claimed at the time (whatever she claimed)" and "looked (however she looked)." In other words, Lewinsky was trying to summarize Tripp's own views, not obstructing justice, and it wouldn't matter if someone had helped with the talking points (no one actually did, according to Lewinsky), since they do not seem to be evidence of any crime.

Ginsburg and Speights believed they had a strong hand, and they stuck to their refusal to agree to the verbal proffer from Lewinsky. "I saw what Starr's office did to people like Webb Hubbell," Ginsburg told me, referring to the former Clinton associate who was granted immunity and was subsequently indicted. "I was not going to take the risk of having her sit down with those people and having them decide that she wasn't giving them enough bad stuff about Clinton. I had to have my deal up front." Whether or not this approach was best for his client, it certainly helped the President. Ginsburg, a registered Republican, denied that he had been doing the President's bidding rather than his client's. "My job was to defend Monica," Ginsburg told me. He didn't merely mean from indictment, for which the evidence was weak. "It was Monica's right to privacy that I wanted to defend. She defended his right to privacy. I wanted the President to come out and admit his involvement and have the whole thing go away. I wanted the American public to say we've had enough."

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It was Starr who may have made the real strategic error in the negotiations over Lewinsky's immunity. Prosecutors do usually want a verbal proffer, but if there were ever a case that called for an exception to that rule, this was it. Delay tends to favor defendants in criminal cases, and it certainly helped Clinton in this one. If Starr had secured Lewinsky's coöperation in February—that is, if he had immunized her on the basis of her written proffer alone—he might have actually built the momentum for a stronger case against Clinton. Instead, Starr dithered for months, neither prosecuting Lewinsky nor granting her immunity. According to people familiar with Starr's operation, two experienced prosecutors on his team, Emmick and Bruce Udolf, wanted to face reality and grant Lewinsky immunity, but Starr's more zealous deputies, Robert Bittman and Jackie Bennett, favored the long holdout. "They hated Ginsburg so much that they were blinded by it," one knowledgeable person says. For Lewinsky, the wait was nerve-racking, but as long as she was Ginsburg's client she avoided both criminal charges and the ordeal of testifying. During this time, Lewinsky signed a photograph of herself with Ginsburg that hangs on the wall of Ginsburg's office. "Bill," it is inscribed. "Thanks for putting up with me. . . . Oh, and being such a wonderful attorney! You're the best! Love, Monica."

DIRECTLY below the signed picture of Ginsburg's former client are three still shots from his appearances on "Meet the Press," "Face the Nation," and "This Week." As I was leaving his office one afternoon, he showed me another photograph. "This one's from 'Face the Nation,' and I've got to get it framed," he said. That's the problem, of course. If Ginsburg had done nothing except sit tight for six months, few would have questioned his conduct. But he used that time to make a spectacle of himself.

During his long siege of talk shows, Ginsburg was self-contradictory, provocative, misleading, and, at times, incoherent. Sometimes he said that Lewinsky's affidavit in the Jones case was true; sometimes he suggested that it was false. He averred that "all twenty-four-year-olds tend to embellish." He admitted that the President gave Lewinsky some gifts. He denied that the two of them had engaged in phone sex. Ginsburg was also unfair to Starr. For example, he asserted that Starr's troops had mistreated Lewinsky during her twelve hours at the Ritz-Carlton—a period when she was, of course, regarded as a criminal suspect. "They abused that poor child," Ginsburg said, employing his usual form of reference to his adult client. This view of Lewinsky as a sort of distaff Scottsboro boy—a position that has become an article of faith among anti-Starr forces—seems dubious. Lewinsky was allowed to use the telephone and wander unescorted through the Pentagon City mall, and she joined Emmick and an F.B.I. agent for dinner at Mozzarella's American Grill.

If Ginsburg helped Lewinsky at all in these appearances, it was by serving as a sort of exhibit for the ludicrousness of the scandal. As he acknowledges, "I was inconsistent with respect to my client's position. But is there anyone who really thought there wasn't sex of some kind between them?" Then as now, he was saying, in effect, "So they had a relationship. So what? What's the big deal?" It was a message that Washington—caught up in the political magnitude of the scandal—found repellent, but one that the rest of the country largely came around to.

Finally, in late May, Ginsburg went too far. He published an extended attack on Starr in the magazine *California Lawyer*. "Congratulations, Mr. Starr!" he wrote. "As a result of your callous disregard for cherished constitutional rights, you may have succeeded in unmasking a sexual relationship between two consenting adults." At this point, Ginsburg really did look as if he were trying to provoke Starr into charging Lewinsky, a point Ginsburg doesn't really deny. His righteous indignation had turned into macho posturing. "I didn't want to make any deals with the Devil, because I was angry," Ginsburg told me. "I got to the point where I wanted to have a trial. I wanted to take them down in court."

LEWINSKY, understandably, did not. She wanted to avoid a confrontation, and on June 2nd Lewinsky's spokeswoman announced that "by mutual agreement" Ginsburg was being replaced by two Washington insiders, Plato Cacheris and Jacob Stein. (Ginsburg insists that he wasn't fired, but people close to Lewinsky say that he was. The truth is probably along the lines of a job departure once described by Casey Stengel: "We call it discharged because there is no question I had to leave.")

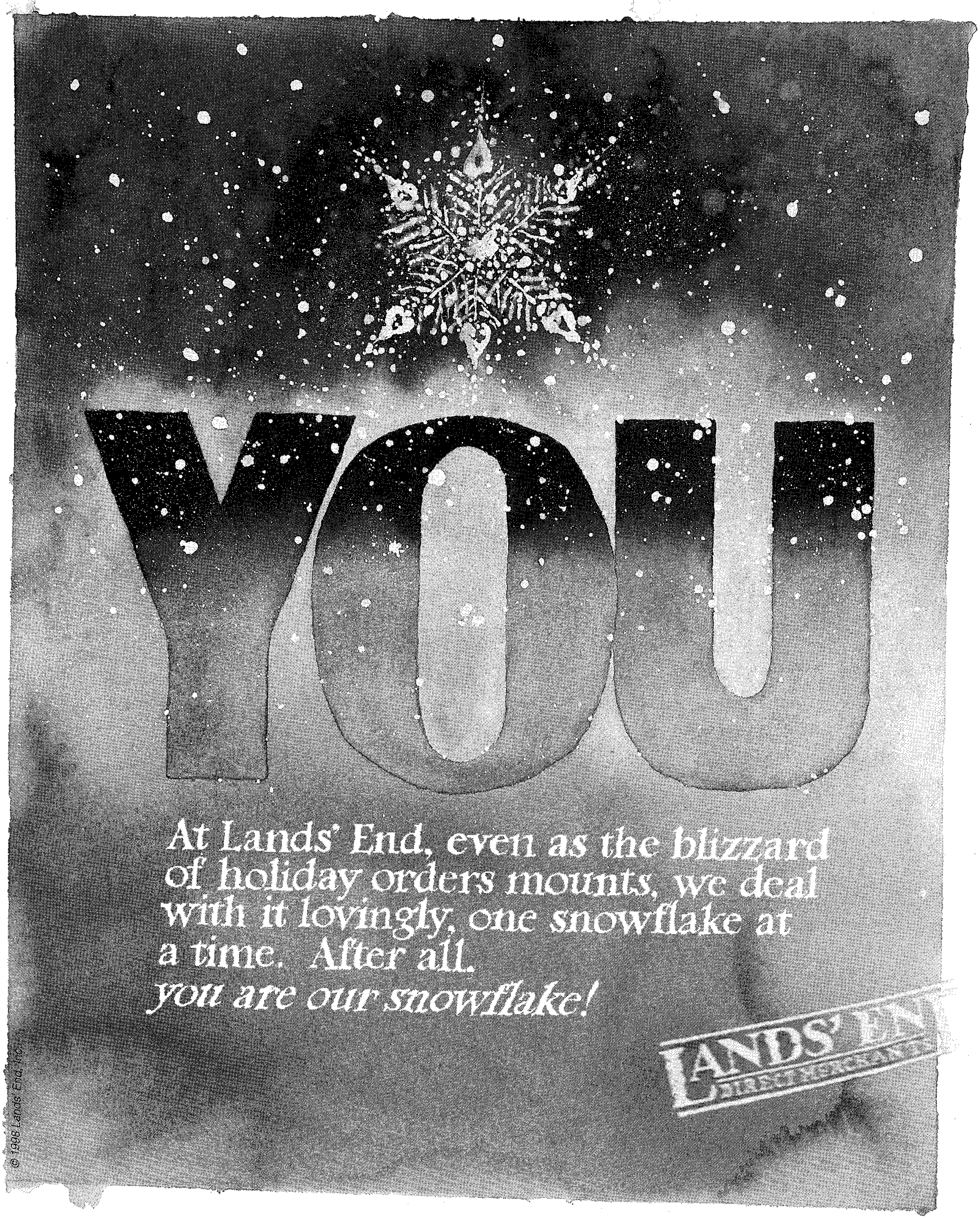
Both of Lewinsky's new lawyers had represented figures in the Watergate scandal, and Cacheris had brokered Fawn Hall's immunity deal during Iran-Contra. They knew the drill, and they did their jobs. By the end of July, they had Lewinsky give a verbal proffer to Starr's prosecutors and, in return, secured her full immunity. But it is too simple to say that they performed well and Ginsburg poorly. As Ginsburg had recognized from the start, immunity had its costs for Lewinsky, too. Under the immunity deal, Starr's prosecutors subjected Lewinsky to what may be the most personally degrading questioning in the history of American law enforcement. (A representative question to Lewinsky from an associate independent counsel named Karin Immergut: "And again, just with respect to bringing you to an orgasm, did he touch you directly on your skin on your genitals, or was it through underwear?") Cacheris and Stein took the safe course, which is not necessarily the same thing as the right course. With Ginsburg, Lewinsky might have been indicted, though there was no real evidence against her. But she also might have escaped testifying altogether. Starr, who was preparing his impeachment report to Congress before he gave Lewinsky immunity, might simply have completed his investigation without either immunizing or indicting her. The one clear loser in the standoff was Starr. He lost seven months and learned nothing more, aside from dirt and details, than what Lewinsky had said in the written proffer of January 31st.

In a larger sense, Bill Ginsburg, like Bill Clinton, recognized that time was on his side. As each new detail in the story emerged—the dress, the cigar, the banalities of the Tripp tapes—the story itself grew lighter and sillier, not weightier and graver. The pornographic details in Starr's report to Congress damaged their author as much as their subjects. The case against Clinton, of course, was always stronger than the one against Lewinsky. Unlike the former intern, the President probably did lie under oath about the details of their sexual activities, however much his lawyers denied it last week. But the country apparently concluded that even so the saga merited laughter and contempt rather than outrage and impeachment. That's why last week's impeachment drama seemed at times to be occurring in a bell jar.

GINSBURG is not unaware that some of that public laughter has been at his expense. "I am suffering from post-traumatic-stress syndrome from this case," he told me. "I had effects—psychiatric effects—from all this. The symptoms were loss of touch with business reality, loss of touch with the values I hold dear with my brothers and sisters at the firm, obsession with a cause and an ideal, and an inability to focus on what I do well, which is try cases. It took me months to recover." Worse, as a result of the tensions from the case, Ginsburg and Bernard Lewinsky are not speaking to one another. This was, Ginsburg told me, "the last interview I'm doing."

Perhaps not. Shortly before I arrived in Los Angeles, CBS had broadcast Jack Kevorkian's apparent homicide of a terminally ill patient, and the subject prompted a reminiscence from Ginsburg during a lunch with me and his law partner Harvey Oringher. "Jack was a pathologist at Long Beach Memorial for years," Ginsburg said. "I got to know him because I did some work for that hospital. I gave him a big hug at the *Time* seventy-fifth-anniversary dinner. You should have seen the looks I got." Ginsburg mused, then added, "You know, I bet Jack calls me for this case."

Oringher quickly turned to me and said, "When we get back to the office, remind me to tell Bill's secretary to hang up when she gets that call." ♦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POSTSCRIPT

# WHERE MY BROTHER FELL TO EARTH

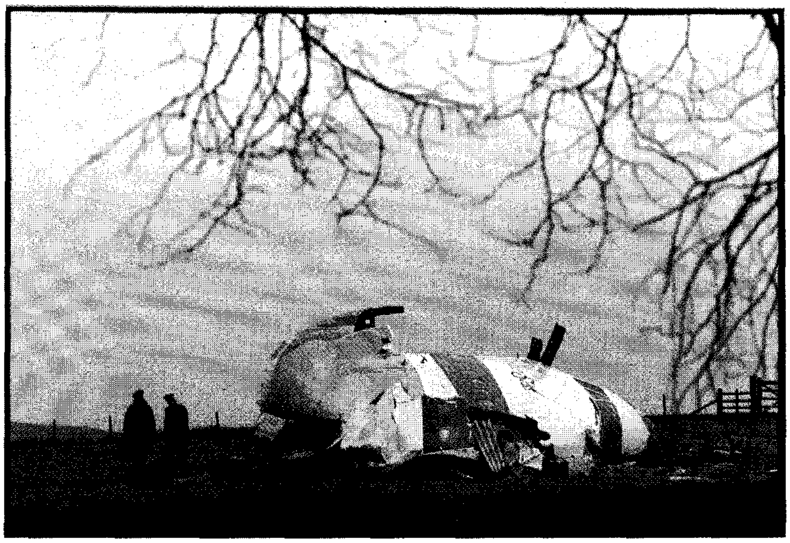
*A first visit to Lockerbie.*

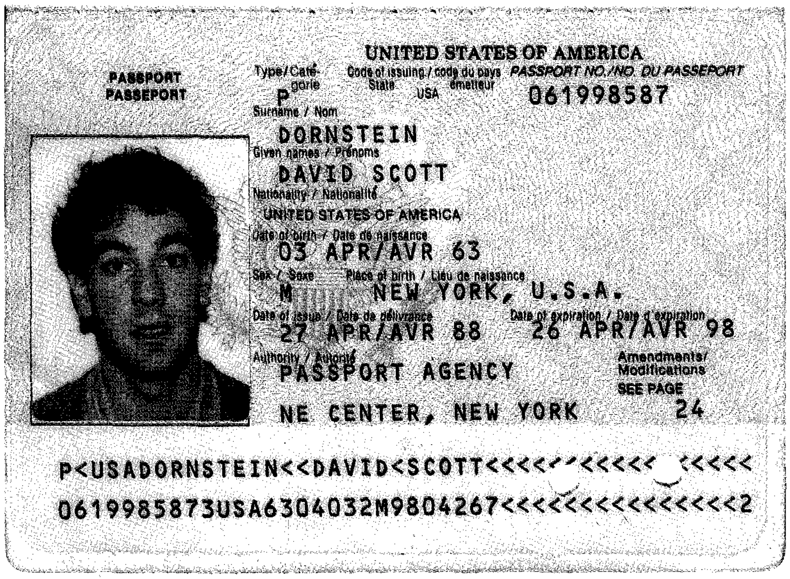
BY KEN DORNSTEIN

At 6:04 P.M. on December 21, 1988, a Boeing 747 jumbo jet registered as N739PA pushed back from Gate K-14 at Heathrow Airport's newly remodelled Terminal 3. The plane was the fifteenth of its kind ever manufactured, bought by Pan Am in 1970 for twenty-two million dollars and christened Maid of the Seas. Juan Trippe, the company's founder, had a vision of flying luxury liners every bit the equal of the great sailing vessels and steamships of an earlier era, and promotional literature for the 747 reached for ways to convey its unprecedented size and comfort. The early menus for Pan Am's transatlantic flights included roast tenderloin of beef with truffle sauce, Maine lobster thermidor, curried lamb, potato fondants, saffron rice, hearts-of-palm salad, a selection of cheeses, puff pastry. Pictures of these first flights show passengers in formal dress waiting for coffee refills from comely air hostesses pouring from silver pitchers.

The plane that my older brother, David, boarded that night in London retained little of its early-seventies swank or grandiosity. N739PA was a Clydesdale workhorse for a company too cash poor to reupholster worn seats or to update outmoded bathrooms. Designated Pan Am Flight 103 and bound for New York's J.F.K. Airport, the plane taxied out runway 27R and sat in traffic. At six-twenty-five, the Maid of the Seas took off, climbing above intermittent rain and showers, ascending through stratocumulus then altocumulus clouds between fifteen thousand and eighteen thousand feet. At six-fifty-six, N739PA levelled at thirty-one thousand feet, travelling more than five hundred miles per hour. At six-fifty-eight, the pilots first communicated with Shanwick Oceanic Control, in Scotland. At 7:02:44, Shanwick radioed route clearance for the transatlantic passage, but the pilots did not acknowledge the message. At 7:02:50, a loud sound ended transmission on the cockpit voice recorder; a bomb planted by terrorists blew a hole in the forward cargo hold, tearing the plane's skin along jagged fracture lines radiating outward in all directions. At 7:03:36, seismic monitors on the ground recorded an impact measuring 1.6 on the Richter scale. The wings, heavy with more than two hundred thousand pounds of fuel, and still attached to a few rows of passengers, took less than a minute to fall six miles to the ground.

The forward cabin and the nose cone separated some two or three seconds after the initial explosion. The main cabin, now stripped of the nose cone, wings, and tail, continued through the night; many passengers remained strapped to their seats in a dumb aluminum tube whose northwesterly course to J.F.K. was suddenly revised downward. Headwinds gusting over a hundred m.p.h. offset the cylinder's forward momentum, tipping it from horizontal to vertical as it reached nineteen thousand feet. For the next ten thousand feet of descent, it fell almost vertically. Gradually it broke up, leaving intact approximately ten or fifteen rows of the cabin floor and the baggage hold beneath it. This sixty-foot-long mass fell together with a few window belts, three of the four sets of landing gear, a cabin door, and a large block of the sixty-six thousand pounds of luggage and cargo aboard. In total, the two hundred and fifty-nine passengers and crew, the fuel, and the cargo brought the takeoff weight of





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*For ten years, I saw my brother mainly through the lens of an international disaster. But the territory of his life has come back into view.*

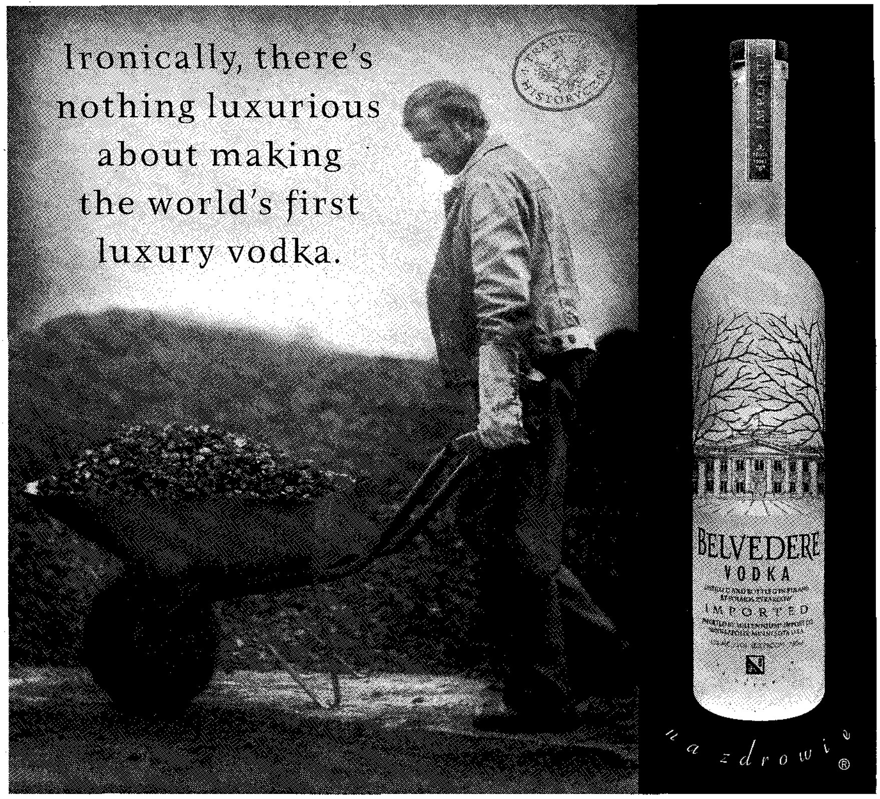
STUART FRANKLIN/MAGNUM

N739PA to more than seven hundred thousand pounds. My brother, thin from six months of travel in Israel, accounted for about a hundred and sixty of those pounds.

Of the items David carried with him onto Flight 103, this is what officials were able to return to my family, in Philadelphia: a bent metal strut from a backpack; two small plastic Ziploc bags of currency—just over four pounds U.K. and thirty-six cents U.S.; booklets of traveller's checks; a passport and an International Student Identity Card; a crushed package of Dunhill menthol cigarettes (six were left); a disposable lighter that no longer worked; an almost completely used-up tube of Crest Tartar Control toothpaste; and a paperback copy of Baudelaire's "Flowers of Evil" so caked in dried mud that it was hard to make out any of the writing on the cover.

I studied these shabby relics when I visited home. I had read about the tremendous effort to bag, tag, and match belongings with bodies. Investigators developed rolls of film to familiarize themselves with a person's clothes and possessions; volunteers handwashed and ironed the tattered remnants and took pains to restore the objects to pre-bombing condition. Passport photographs of each of the passengers were greatly enlarged and fastened to boxes that would be filled with whatever could be linked to each person. A British tabloid referred to the rows of these boxes as the "Shelves of Sorrow"; police officers who worked in the property room reported an intense and sometimes disturbing attachment to the individuals they felt they had come to know over the months it took to identify their things. The dirt that made it to my home seemed like a minor failure of the system, and I was glad of it. Unlike the many dozens of relatives who went to the small Scottish town where the plane fell, a few hundred miles north of London, my family stayed home. For years, the dirt felt like my only real unfiltered fact about Lockerbie.

THE dried mud on David's book came from the back yard of Ella Ramsden, a widow who lived alone with her terrier, Cara, in a two-story concrete building in Rosebank Crescent, part of a government housing project built in the sixties. Her miraculous



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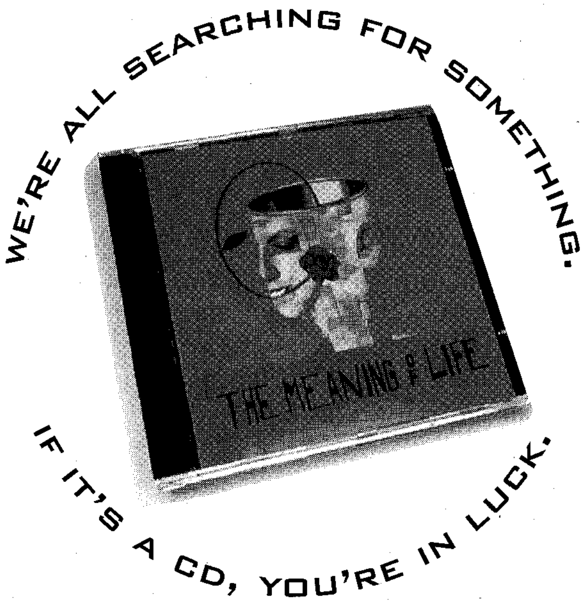

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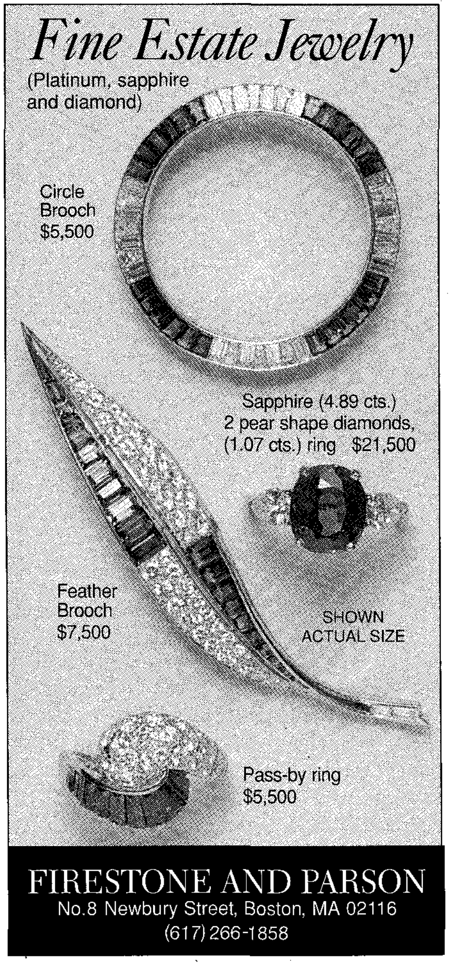

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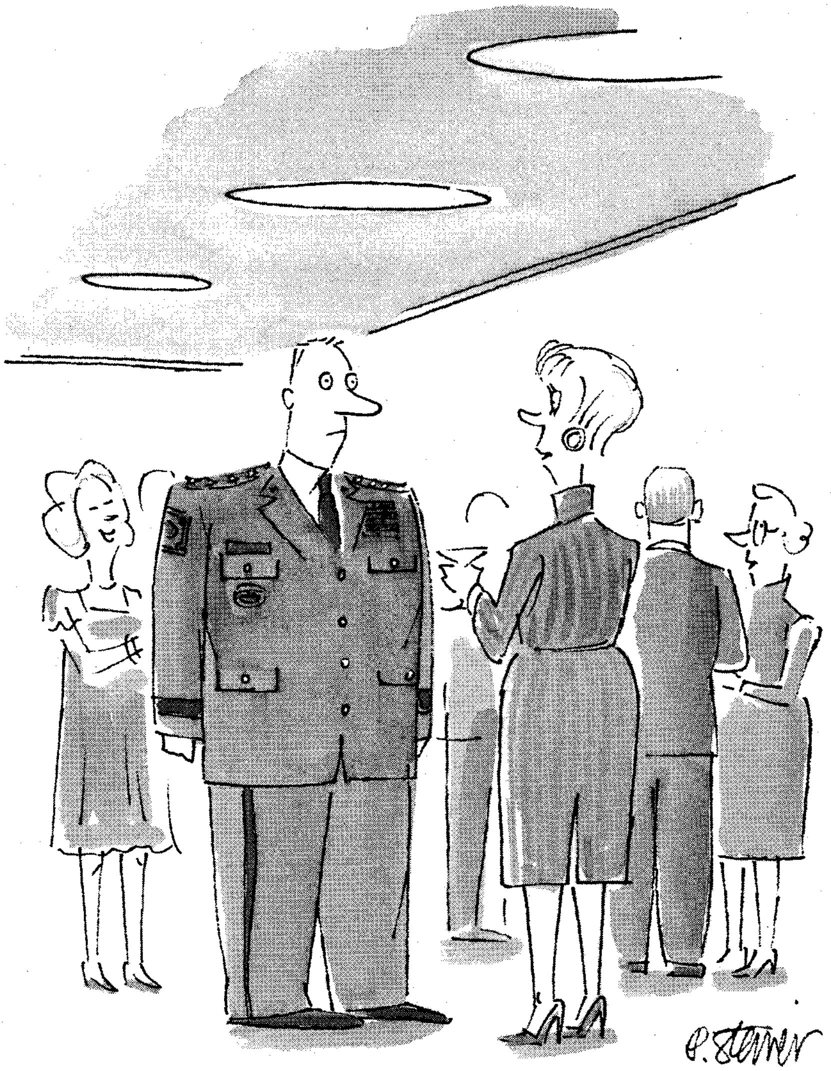

*"A four-star general must be a very good general indeed."*

• •

escape from her home on the night of the bombing became an internationally reported human-interest story. The bodies of more than sixty passengers landed in and around her house; controversial pictures of a woman being lowered from a chimney were taken nearby. Ramsden soon moved to another part of town. But, from the beginning, she was sought out by visitors, and her rebuilt home became a place of pilgrimage. Visitors also sought out other major places where bodies had fallen: a cluster of homes at Sherwood Crescent, the Lamb Hill overlooking town (site of a bygone sheep market), the golf course, and a half-dozen farmers' fields several miles east of Lockerbie.

In the aftermath of death, memory can become bound up with place: sites of loss can be sanctified, obliterated, or marked, as with a cross by the side of the road where the family station wagon, kids asleep in the back, skidded off. For me, the whole knot of feelings I had for my brother became fixed around the town where he fell to earth. Years later, when I finally went to Lockerbie, I did not look for Ella Ramsden, and I lingered just long enough around her rebuilt home to pique the interest of a man with tattooed arms who came to the door to say that there were bigger monuments to see elsewhere in the town.

For ten days, I walked the streets and hills; I photographed, tape-recorded, and took notes. At times, I was in a mystical, supercharged state, looking deeply into all things for messages. Once, I awakened at dawn thinking the wind carried in its gusts the supernatural force of a clue. I went to the window, half expecting an apparition, a billowing brother ghost in otherworldly vestments. But I found just an empty traffic plaza built around a statue to Scottish war dead, and saw only a lone figure hunched against the cold. Often I tried to imagine the scream of a disintegrating 747 over the quiet of a town that had just finished dinner and was settling in to watch an episode of "This Is Your Life."

THE main memorial and burial place for victims of the bombing—primarily for those killed on the ground and for all unidentified remains—was at Dryfesdale cemetery. I passed it several times on the bus without knowing it was there; the understated signs had been the deliberate choice of a town that did not want to advertise its wounds. At Tundergarth Parish Church, across from the field where the nose cone landed, a gravedigger's stone work shed had been converted into an official Room of Remembrance. To get to Tundergarth, I climbed a road to the east, along one of two main wreckage trails where sheepherders were still said to find debris from the 747. Bodies, I knew, had been found all along the hill where sheep now grazed.

Tundergarth, with its ancient low stone walls and hills so lush, soft, and rolling green you wanted to drop onto them yourself, was where I had imagined David had fallen—not at Rosebank, across from a meatpacking plant and railroad tracks. I had read about relatives walking the Tundergarth fields, finding the small crater where their loved ones dug into the rain-softened earth; some put up shrines, many listened with a mug of warm cider as farmers shared their tender feelings about the strangers who had fallen into their lives that December night. I envied them. It seemed that first-class passengers fell on a first-class site, and economy class got peanuts and soda.

Each body, treated as the subject of a separate murder case, was photographed extensively where it fell—not alone but with a Scottish police official in the frame who could later testify about it. Donald Black, a detective constable from Glasgow's Strathclyde Police, posed for the pictures with my brother. Almost ten years later, when I reached him by phone, Black remembered David. When he first uncovered him, Black said, David was mostly clothed, not still attached to his seat, and not severely mutilated—not compared with other bodies he had seen. He spoke with a deep desire to help me. Black even recalled that he had gone for a "wee bit of counselling" in the months after Lockerbie, to restore closeness with his wife, who had felt a change in him.

David was found at 1 P.M. on December 26th: he was the final person removed from Ella Ramsden's yard, more than a day after the last of the others. Detective Constable Black told me that a brick wall had collapsed on top of him. "We had almost totally cleared the site when one of the dogs sniffed out your brother. I was relieved that we hadn't left someone behind." I momentarily shared some of Black's satisfaction in a job well done, but then I had to picture David out there all those days. Details offer consolation, but only for a while.

I've located a copy of the December, 1988, magazine *Clipper* that was available to every passenger on Flight 103. It is hard for me to imagine David reading any of the features: one about a Greek "master jeweller," another on the "tony boutiques and refined specialty shops" of modern Frankfurt. I hate to think of his wearing the airline headphones and listening to the songs of Mexican impresario José José. Or even, just for that moment before 7:02:50, reading the description of an in-flight movie, "Crocodile Dundee II," and thinking he might watch. Hard facts about what really went on in that cabin in the minutes before and after the explosion are so difficult to come by that even this feels significant.

OVER the years, I have kept up with the news from Lockerbie. Lockerbie's meatpacking plant, one of the largest exporters of lamb in the United Kingdom, has been closed periodically by a succession of different owners. The Lockerbie creamery, which once produced blocks of cheddar in buildings situated fifty yards from Ella Ramsden's place, continues to market Lockerbie-brand dairy products, despite initial worries of offending those affected by the bombing. The former Dexstar chemical plant, used as a temporary morgue during the disaster, reopened as a corrugated-box factory, where Bailey's Irish Cream is packaged.

The latest reports from Lockerbie are of local people bracing for an unwelcome rush of media, politicians, and disaster tourists this month, during the tenth anniversary of the bombing. Their message has been clear: everyone

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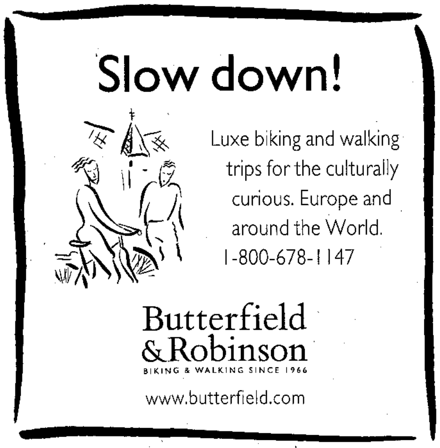

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but the relatives should stay home, because they want to remember (or not remember) alone. I don't like to see Lockerbie back in the news, either, but the stories find me—not just anniversaries but reports of a possibly imminent criminal trial for the Libyan bombing suspects and, always, other air disasters, one crash recalling another. Seeing the families arrive in Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia, where a Swissair jet crashed last September, I thought about how they were just beginning a process that I was ending. I'm glad I finally went to Lockerbie, but I have no plans to return.

For years, I saw my brother mainly through the lens of an international disaster. I focussed on Lockerbie, and on the people, like Detective Constable Black, who knew my brother briefly in death, while almost everything else about David blurred and receded. The mysteries of the place, the plane, and that December night no longer grip my imagination. But the territory of my brother's life itself has come back into view, strangely foreign and new, as if I were entering that country for the first time. David was twenty-five when he died. His ashes are buried in a Long Island cemetery near Belmont Racetrack: but his corpus, the body of his work—the multiform, never finished Dave œuvre—survives largely intact. He wrote; and he left behind boxes of stories, plays, *pensées diverses*, poems, assorted humor pieces, extravagant accounts of phantasmagorical dreams, and starts at larger fictions. Rick Moody, who was a few years ahead of David at Brown, wrote my father in 1989 that David would have made a "significant contribution.... I'm going to miss this colleague, and miss that novel, which I was looking forward to a lot." A nationally circulated story ("A Tragic Twist on a Writer's Life") said that he was returning with a copy of his first novel to deliver to expectant American publishers. This didn't square with what I knew about him, but in the calculus of tragedy people's lives are often rounded up to the next-higher station in life.

Here's a true story about one of his travels: In November of 1984, returning by Amtrak to Providence from a Thanksgiving vacation in Philadelphia, Dave spotted a pleasant-looking woman in her twenties reading *The New Republic*. He sat next to her. "I never board a train or walk down a street without hoping that I will fall in love with someone or something," he began to write in his notebook. "Life is very sad. If there cannot be communication between two educated young folk sitting together on a train, speaking the same language, I fear for the Sikh and the Hindi, the Jew and Arab, the Chinese and Taiwanese." Over the next few hours, the two passengers talked. They visited the AmCafé for a beer. Then David persuaded the woman to run lines with him from a play he was acting in at school. After a while, she returned to her magazine, leaving him at a loss. ("I fear it is ending," he wrote. "Our locomotive love is derailing.") He showed the woman what he had written about her. The woman's writing appears next in the journal.

At first, the woman on the train found David self-satisfied, and a little overbearing. She explained her "policy" of not blocking the seat next to her, and said she felt burned once again by this "gamble." But then they talked. The woman offered some of her family history, and David met this with an impromptu soliloquy that mixed fact and fiction in a characteristic way: "Aren't my eyelashes unusually long and curled? Not in three generations of my family has anyone had blue eyes. How did I get them? The geneticists are baffled.... At twelve, I beat John McEnroe in the National 12 & under Tennis Championships in Kalamazoo, Michigan.... I hope your life goes well. I hope that you have children whom you want to have and love. I hope that your husband-to-be continues to be the good man he now seems to be. I hope you will tell me how you, Emily Dexter, are faring. Inform me of the state of your mind."

Emily Dexter gave David her phone number and said she hoped he would visit her (and her fiancé) in Boston. The two parted at Providence and had no further contact. Some fourteen years later, Emily Dexter, now married with two kids, remembered the train ride only vaguely. David would have remembered everything: he wrote it all in his notebook, often in large block letters; then he wrote encouragement to himself in equally large letters, as if to prove to himself (and to disbelieving posterity) that David Dornstein mattered. ♦

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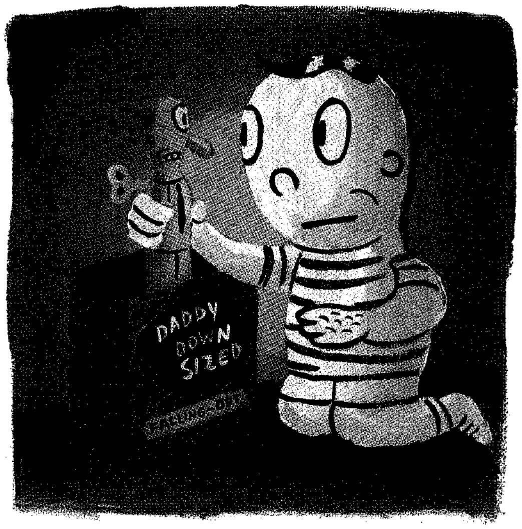

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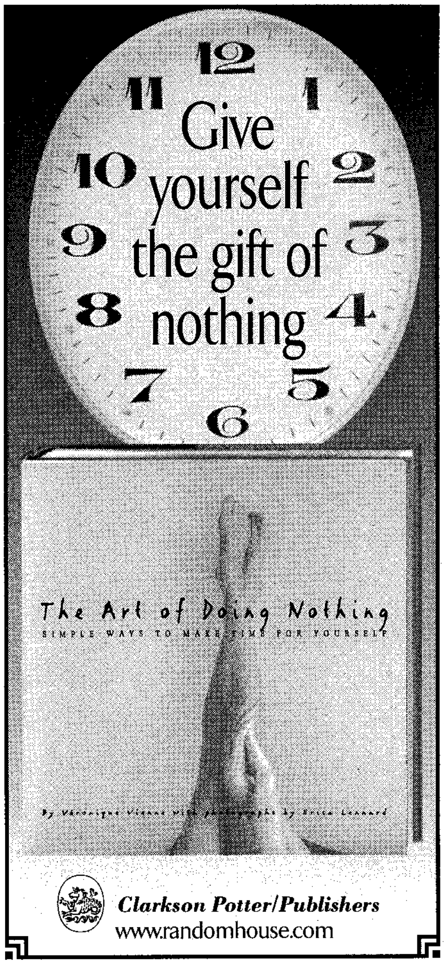

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THE SPORTING SCENE

# JORDAN'S MOMENT

*In the championship series, he became a player for all seasons.*

BY DAVID HALBERSTAM

The desolate neighborhood on the West Side of Chicago where the Bulls play their home games is very quiet these days. Their gleaming new arena, the United Center, is set down there as if on a moonscape. All twelve pre-Christmas home games have been cancelled, because of the labor dispute between the owners and the players, which was initiated by the owners in a lockout described as a struggle between short millionaires and tall millionaires, or between billionaires and millionaires. The National Basketball Association, which would have entered its fifty-second season this fall, seems to have fallen victim to its own dizzying success, one that has seen the player payroll increase by an estimated two thousand five hundred per cent in the last twenty years. The incident that probably triggered the lockout occurred about a year ago, when the Minnesota Timberwolves extended the contract of a gifted young player named Kevin Garnett, paying him a hundred and twenty-six million dollars over seven years. The Timberwolves' general manager, the former Boston Celtic Kevin McHale, completed the deal; unhappy with the direction of the league and his own part in it, he later noted, "We have our hand on the neck of the golden goose and we're squeezing hard."

In Chicago, where for much of the last decade the best basketball team in the country has played, the silence is particularly painful. The last time games were played here, the Bulls, led by Michael Jordan, were contesting for their sixth N.B.A. championship, and playing against a favored team, the Utah Jazz. It was an indelible series, the memory of which serves as this year's only fare—and it is melancholy fare—for basketball junkies everywhere.

Michael Jordan was thirty-five, and arguably the dominant athlete in American sports, as he led Chicago into Salt Lake City. He was nearing the end of his career, and he was, if anything, a more complete player than ever. What his body could no longer accomplish in terms of pure physical ability he could compensate for with his shrewd knowledge of both the game and the opposing players. Nothing was wasted. There was a new quality, almost an iciness, to the way he played now. In 1995, after Jordan returned to basketball from his year-and-a-half-long baseball sabbatical, he spent the summer in Hollywood making the movie "Space Jam," but he demanded that the producers build a basketball court where he could work out every day. Old friends dropping by the Warner lot noticed that he was working particularly hard on a shot that was already a minor part of his repertoire but which he was now making a signature shot—a jumper where he held the ball, faked a move to the basket, and then, at the last minute, when he finally jumped, fell back slightly, giving himself almost perfect separation from the defensive player. Because of his jumping ability and his threat to drive, that shot was virtually unguardable. More, it was a very smart player's concession to the changes in his body wrought by time, and it signified that he was entering a new stage in his career. What professional basketball men were now seeing was something that had been partly masked earlier in his career by his singular physical ability and the artistry of what he did, and that something was a consuming passion not just to excel but to dominate. "He wants to cut your heart out and then show it to you," his former coach Doug Collins said. "He's Hannibal Lecter," Bob Ryan, the Boston *Globe's* expert basketball writer, said. When a television reporter asked the Bulls' center, Luc Longley, for a one-word description of Jordan, Longley's response was "Predator."

"The athlete you remind me of the most is Jake LaMotta," the Bulls' owner, Jerry Reinsdorf, told Jordan one day, re-

DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI

ferring to the fearless middleweight fighter of another era, "because the only way they can stop you is to kill you."

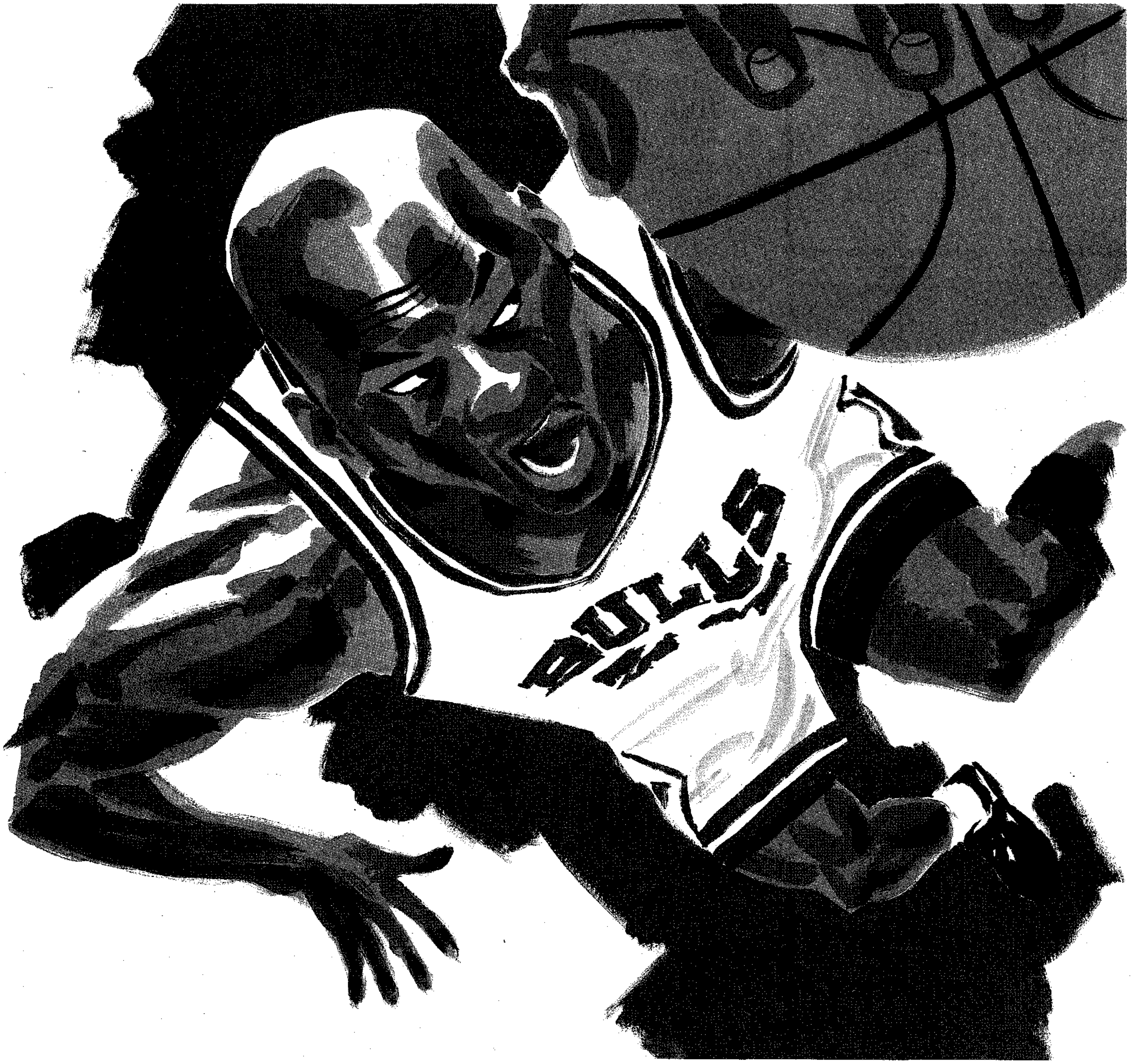
"Who's Jake LaMotta?" Jordan answered.

In Utah during last year's N.B.A. finals, Jordan had woken up before Game Five violently ill. It seemed impossible that he would play. (Whether it was altitude sickness or food poisoning no one was ever quite sure.) At about 8 A.M., one of Jordan's bodyguards, fixtures in his entourage, called Chip Schaefer, the team trainer, to say that Jordan had been up all night with flu-like symptoms and was seriously ill. Rushing to Jordan's room, Schaefer found him curled up in the fetal position and wrapped in blankets, though the thermostat had been cranked up to its maximum. The greatest player in the world looked like a weak little zombie.

Schaefer immediately hooked Jordan up to an I.V. and tried to get as much fluid into him as possible. He also gave him medication and decided to let him rest as much as he could that morning. Word of Jordan's illness quickly spread among journalists at the Delta Center, where the game was to be played, and the general assumption was that he would not play. One member of the media, though, was not so sure—James Worthy, who, after a brilliant career with the Los Angeles Lakers, was working for the Fox network. Having played with Jordan at North Carolina and against him in the pros, Worthy knew not only how Michael drove himself but, even more important, how he motivated himself. When reports circulated that Michael had a fever of a hundred and two, Worthy told the other Fox reporters that the fever meant nothing. "He'll play," Worthy said. "He'll figure out what he can do, he'll conserve his strength in other areas, and he'll have a big game."

In the locker room before the game, Jordan's teammates were appalled by what they saw. Michael, normally quite dark, was a color somewhere between white and gray, Bill Wennington, the Bulls' backup center, recalled, and his eyes, usually so vital, looked dead.

At first, fans watching at home could not understand how Jordan could play at all. Then they were pulled into the drama of the event, which had by now



*The crowd, Michael Jordan remembered, had got very quiet with his steal. That was, he later said, the moment for him.*

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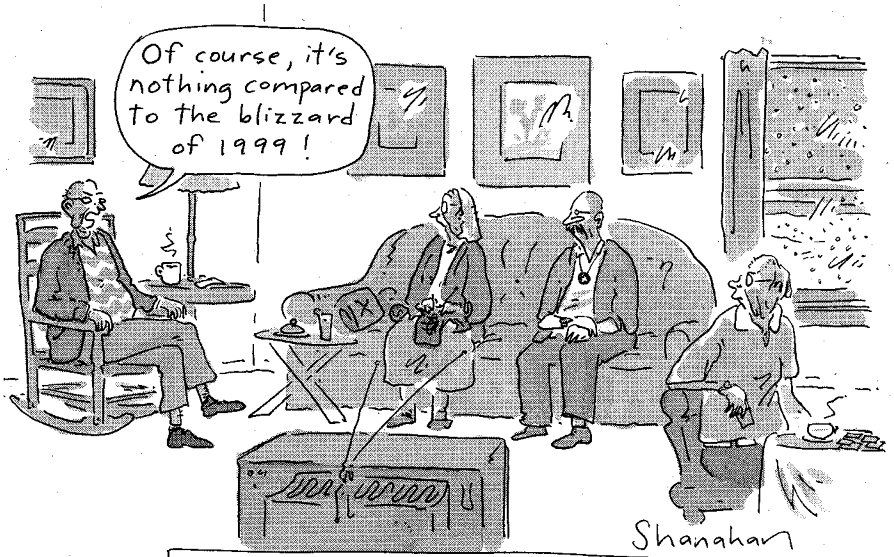

Of course, it's nothing compared to the blizzard of 1999!
Shanahan

THE OLD PSYCHICS' HOME

• •

transcended mere basketball and taken on the nature of an entirely different challenge. Early in the second quarter, Utah led 36–20, but Jordan played at an exceptional level—he scored twenty-one points in the first half—and at halftime his team was down only four points. The Bulls managed to stay close in the second half. With forty-six seconds left in the game, and Utah leading by a point, Jordan was fouled going to the basket. "Look at the body language of Michael Jordan," Marv Albert, the announcer, said. "You have the idea that he has difficulty just standing up." Jordan made the first of two foul shots, which tied the score, and somehow grabbed the loose ball after the missed second shot. Then, with twenty-five seconds left, the Jazz inexplicably left him open, and he hit a three-pointer, which gave Chicago an 88–85 lead and the key to a 90–88 win. He ended up with thirty-eight points, fifteen of them in the last quarter.

THROUGHOUT the 1997-98 season, Jordan had wanted to meet Utah in the finals again, in no small part because after the 1997 finals too many people had said that if only Utah had had the home-court advantage the Jazz would have won. He was eager to show that true warriors could win as handily on the road, and he was also eager to show that although Karl Malone was a great player, whose abilities he admired, there was a significant degree of difference in their respective abilities.

Unlike more talented teams, Utah almost never made mental mistakes during a game, and at the Delta Center, home of some of the league's noisiest fans, a game that was at all close could easily turn into a very difficult time for a visitor. In the Western Conference finals, Utah had gone up against the Lakers, a young team led by the immense Shaquille O'Neal, and with considerably more athletic ability, and yet the Jazz swept the Lakers in four games, making them look like a group of befuddled playground all-stars. "Playing them is like the project guys against a team," Nick Van Exel, the Laker point guard, said after the series. "The project guys always want to do the fancy behind-the-back dribbles, the spectacular plays and the dunks, while the Jazz are a bunch of guys doing pick-and-rolls and the little things. They don't get caught up in the officiating, they don't get down on each other, they don't complain. They stand as a team and stay focussed."

Utah was a *team*, smart and well coached, and its players never seemed surprised late in a game. No team in the league executed its offense, particularly the interplay between John Stockton and Karl Malone, with the discipline of Utah. But that was a potential vulnerability, the Chicago coaches believed, for the Jazz were very predictable. What worked night after night against ordinary teams during the regular season might not work in a prolonged series against great defensive players. The price of discipline might be a gap in creativity—the ability to freelance—when the disciplined offense was momentarily checkmated.

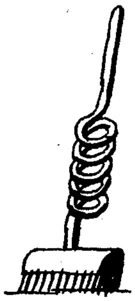
Some of this could be seen in the difference between Jordan and Malone. Each had improved greatly after he entered the league, and each had the ability to carry his team night after night. But Jordan's ability to create shots for himself, and thereby dominate at the end of big games when the defensive pressure on both sides had escalated significantly, was dramatically greater than Malone's. Malone had improved year by year not only as a shooter but as someone who could pass out of the double team. Still, like most big, powerful men, he could not improvise nearly as well as Jordan, and he was very much dependent on teammates like Stockton to create opportunities for him. What the Chicago coaches, and Jordan himself, believed was that the Bulls would be able to limit Karl Malone in the fourth quarter of a tight game but that Utah would never be able to limit Michael Jordan, because of Jordan's far greater creativity.

There was one other thing that the Chicago coaches and Jordan thought about Malone, which gave them extra confidence as they got ready for the final series, and which differed from how most other people in the league perceived Malone. Malone, the Chicago staff believed, had not come into the league as a scorer or a shooter, but he had worked so hard that he was now one of the premier shooters among the league's big men, averaging just under thirty points a game for the last ten years. But deep in his heart, they thought, he did not have the psyche of a shooter like Larry Bird, Reggie Miller, or even Jordan; therefore, it remained something of an alien role. At the end of a big game, they suspected, with the game on the line, that would be a factor.

THE Bulls' coach, Phil Jackson, hoped to steal Game One of the championship, in Salt Lake City, because the Jazz had had ten days off and were rusty. But it had taken the Bulls seven exhausting games to beat the Indiana Pacers for the Eastern Conference title, and they came into Game One slow and tired, constantly a step behind in their defensive rotations. Even so, they made up eight points in the fourth quarter to force Utah into overtime before they lost.

The Bulls recovered, however, and stole Game Two, and, with that, the Jazz lost the home-court advantage they had worked so hard for all season. Worse, the series now seemed to be turning out the way the Chicago coaches had wanted it to, with the Bulls' guards limiting Stockton's freedom of movement and isolating Malone, who, on his own, was no longer a dominant presence.

Game Three, in Chicago, went badly for Utah. On defense, the Bulls played a nearly perfect game: they stole the ball, they cut off passing lanes, and their defensive rotations were so quick that Utah's shots almost always seemed desperate—forced up at the last second. It was as if the Chicago players had known on each Jazz possession exactly what Utah was going to try to do. The final score was 96–54, the widest margin in the history of the finals, and Utah's fifty-four points were the lowest total in any N.B.A. game since the introduction of the twenty-four-second clock, in 1954. "This is actually the score?" Jerry Sloan, the Utah coach, said in his post-game press conference, holding up the stat sheet. "I thought it was a hundred and ninety-six. It sure seemed like a hundred and ninety-six."



Game Four was more respectable, with the Bulls winning 86–82. But the Jazz came back in Game Five. Malone, bottled up so long, and the target of considerable criticism in the papers, had a big game, hitting seventeen of twenty-seven shots for thirty-nine points, while Chicago seemed off its game, its concentration slipping. Jackson said later that he thought there had been far too much talk of winning at home, too much talk of champagne and of how to stop a riot in case the Bulls won—and too much debate over whether or not this would be Michael Jordan's last game ever in Chicago in a Bulls uniform.

AT this late point in Michael Jordan's career, there were certain people who thought of themselves as Jordanologists, students not only of the game but of the man himself. They believed

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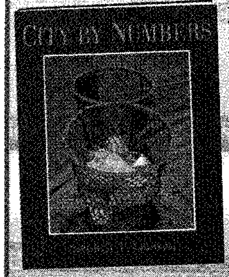

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that they could think like him; that is, they could pick up his immensely sensitive feel for the rhythm and texture of each game, his sense of what his team needed to do at a given moment, and what his role should be—scoring, passing, or playing defense. Would he set an example for his teammates by taking up the defensive level? Would he spend the first quarter largely passing off in order to get them in the game? Over the years, he had come a long way from the young man who, surrounded by lesser teammates, had gone all out for an entire game, trying to do everything by himself. The mature Michael Jordan liked to conserve energy, let opponents use theirs up, and then when the moment was right take over the game.

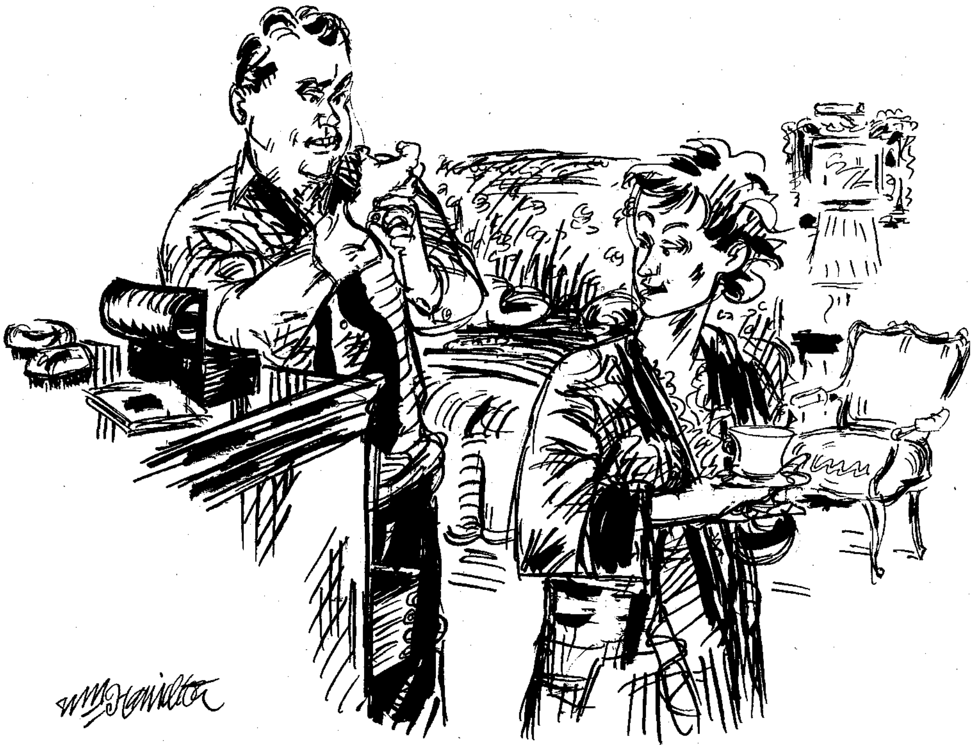
Now, in Salt Lake City, it was as if he had reverted to the Michael Jordan who had carried that bottom-feeding Chicago team in the early days of his career, the player who effectively let his teammates know they were not to get in his way, because he was going to do it all himself. On this night, he knew that he was going to get little help from Scottie Pippen, who was severely injured—virtually a basketball cripple. Dennis Rodman was a rebounder, not a scorer. Toni Kukoc had played well lately, but he was always problematical. Ron Harper, once an exceptional scorer, had become, late in his career in Chicago, a defensive specialist, and he, too, was sick—apparently from something he had eaten. Luc Longley, the center, was in the midst of a wretched playoff series, seeming out of synch with himself and his teammates. (He played only fourteen minutes of this game, scored no points, and picked up four fouls.) Steve Kerr was a talented outside shooter, but Utah would be able to cover him more closely with Pippen limited.

It was clear from the beginning of the game that Jordan would try to do it all. Pippen was out for much of the first half, and Jordan, with Phil Jackson's assent, rationed his energy on defense; at one point, the assistant coach, Tex Winter, turned to Jackson and said, "Michael's giving defense a lick and promise," and Jackson said, "Well, Tex, he does need a bit of a rest." By all rights, the Jazz should have been able to grind the Bulls down and take a sizable lead, but the Bulls, even with their bench players on the floor, never let Utah break the game open. On offense, Jordan carried the load. He was conserving his energy, playing less defense and doing less rebounding than he normally did, but at the half he had twenty-three points. Utah's lead at the half, 49–45, was not what any Jazz fan would want against such a vulnerable Chicago team.

Later, Jordan said that he had remained confident throughout the game, because Utah did not break it open when it had the chance. Jordan's former teammate B. J. Armstrong, watching at home, thought that Utah was blowing it, leaving the game out there for Michael to steal. Armstrong and Jordan had been friends, but it had often been difficult for Armstrong to play alongside Michael. The game had come so much more easily to Jordan than to anyone else, Armstrong felt, and Michael had often showed his impatience with his more mortal teammates—indeed, at one point a frustrated Armstrong had checked out of the library several books on genius hoping that they would help him learn to play with Michael. One of Jordan's particular strengths, Armstrong believed, was that he had the most acute sense of the tempo and mood of every game of any player he had ever seen. A lot of players and coaches can look at film afterward and point their finger at the exact moment when a game slipped away, but Jordan could tell instantly, even as it was happening. It was, Armstrong thought, as if he were in the game playing and yet sitting there studying it and completely distanced from it. It was a gift that allowed him to monitor and lift his own team at critical moments and to destroy opposing teams when he sensed their special moment of vulnerability.

Now, watching the second half of Game Six, Armstrong had a sense that Michael regarded the game as a potential gift. The Jazz, after all, could have put it away early on by exploiting the obvious Chicago weaknesses. But they hadn't. If they had, Armstrong thought, Michael might have saved his energy for Game Seven. But instead the Jazz were leaving Game Six out there for the taking.

As the fourth quarter opened, the Utah lead was marginal, 66–61; the low score tended to favor the Bulls, for it meant that they had set the tempo and remained in striking distance. Slowly, the Bulls began to come back, until, with un-



*"Daddy made it a point not to wear gold cufflinks when he did his Christmas tips."*

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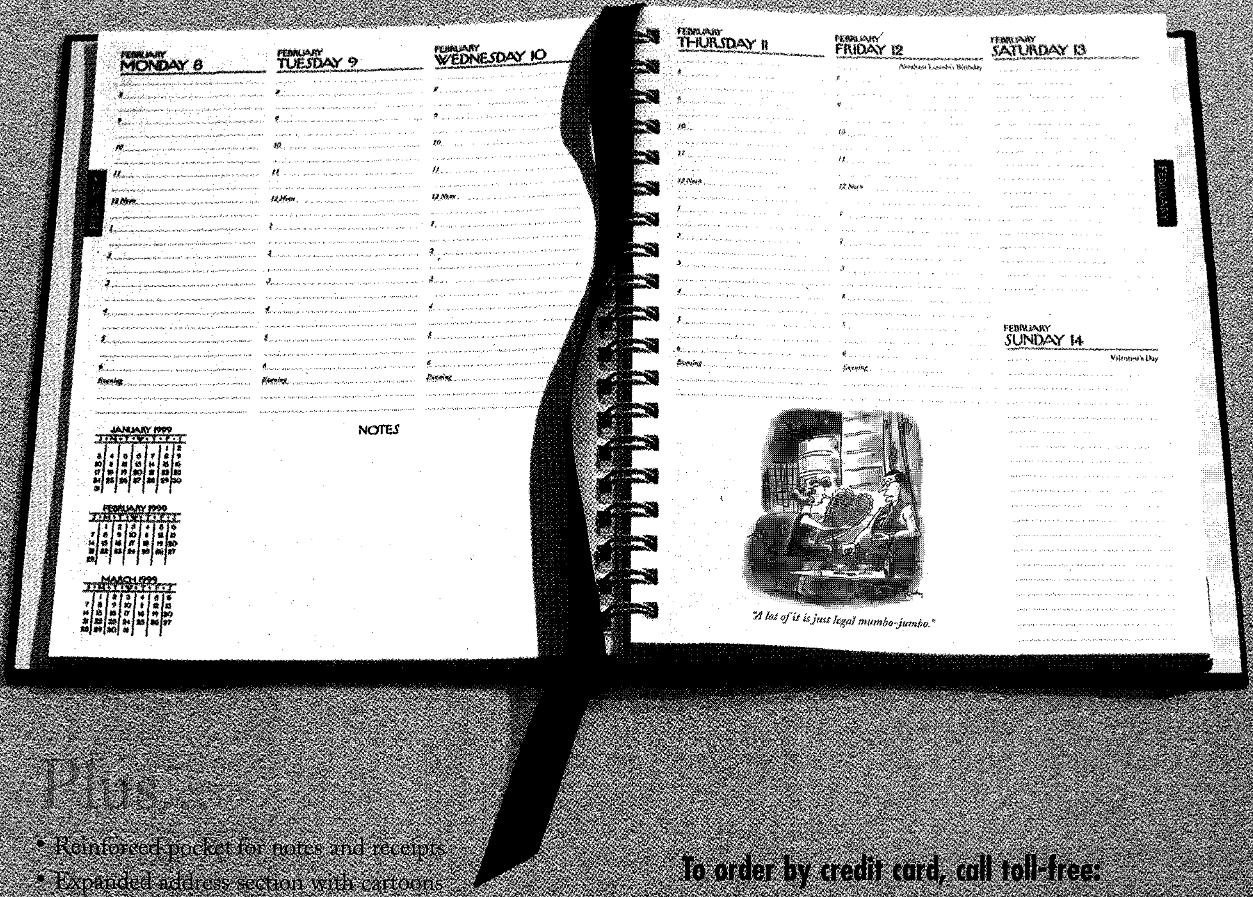
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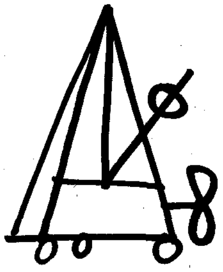
der five minutes to play, the score was tied at 77. Jordan was obviously tired, but so was everyone else. Tex Winter was alarmed when Jordan missed several jump shots in a row. "Look, he can't get any elevation," he told Jackson. "His legs are gone."

During a time-out two minutes later, Jackson told Jordan to give up the jump shot and drive. "I know," Jordan said, agreeing. "I'm going to start going to the basket—they haven't got a center in now, so the way is clear."

Once again, it was Michael Jordan time. A twenty-foot jumper by Malone on a feed from Stockton gave Utah an 83–79 lead, but Jordan cut it to 83–81 when he drove to the basket, was fouled by Utah's Bryon Russell, with 2:07 on the clock, and hit a pair of foul shots. Back and forth they went, and when Jordan drove again he was fouled again, this time by Stockton. He hit both free throws, to tie the score at 83, with 59.2 seconds left.



Then Utah brought the ball up court and went into its offense very slowly. Stockton worked the ball in to Malone, and Chicago was quick to double-team him. Malone fed Stockton, on the opposite side of the court, with a beautiful cross-court pass. With Harper rushing back a split second too late, Stockton buried a twenty-four-foot jumper. That gave Utah a three-point lead, 86–83. The clock showed 41.9 seconds left as Chicago called its last time-out. The Utah crowd began to breathe a little easier.

DICK EBERSOL, the head of NBC Sports, watched the final minutes in the NBC truck. He had started the game sitting in the stands, next to the N.B.A. commissioner, David Stern, but had become so nervous that he had gone down to the control truck. Ebersol liked Michael Jordan very much, and was well aware that he and his network were the beneficiaries of Jordan's unique appeal. Jordan's presence in the finals was worth eight or nine million viewers to NBC. Ebersol was delighted by the ratings for this series so far—they would end up at 18.7, the highest ever. At this point, though, Ebersol was rooting not for Michael Jordan but for a seventh game, and that meant he was rooting, however involuntarily, for Utah. A seventh game would bring NBC and its parent company, General Electric, an additional ten or twelve million dollars in advertising revenues. Jordan's exploits had brought many benefits to the N.B.A. over the years, but he was such a great player that no N.B.A. final in which he was involved had gone to the ratings and advertising jackpot of a seventh game.

When Stockton gave Utah the three-point lead with 41.9 seconds showing on the clock, Ebersol was thrilled. He was going to get his Game Seven after all. "Well, guys," he told the production people in the truck, turning away from the screens, "we'll be back here on Wednesday, and the home folks"—the G.E. management people—"are going to be very happy."

During the Chicago time-out, Jackson and Jordan talked about what kind of shot he might take, and Jackson reminded him that his legs were tired and it was affecting his jump shot. "I've got my second wind now," Jordan answered. "If you have to go for the jumper, you've got to follow through better," Jackson said. "You haven't been following through." Tex Winter drew up a variation on a basic Chicago play, called Whatthefuck—actually an old New York play, from Jackson's time on the Knicks. It called for the Bulls to clear out on one side, in order to isolate Jordan against Bryon Russell. As it happened, Jordan took the ball out near the back-court line, moved in a leisurely fashion into his attack mode on the right side, and then, with Utah having no chance to double him, drove down the right side and laid the ball up high and soft for the basket. The score was 86–85 Utah, with thirty-seven seconds left. It was a tough basket off a big-time drive.

That gave Utah one wonderful additional possession—a chance either to hit a basket or to use Malone to draw fouls. Stockton came across the half-court line almost casually. He bided his time, letting the clock run down, and finally, with about eleven seconds left on the twenty-four-second clock, he worked the ball to Malone.

BUZZ PETERSON, Jordan's close friend and college roommate, was watching Game Six with his wife, Jan, at their home, in Boone, North Carolina. In the final minute of the game, Jan turned to him and said, "They're going to lose." But Peterson, who had played with Jordan in countless real games and in practice games when the winning team was the first to reach eleven and Jordan's team was behind 10–8, knew all too well that moments like this were what he lived for: with his team behind, he would predict victory to his teammates and then take over the last part of the game. Peterson told his wife, "Don't be too sure. Michael's got one more good shot at it." Just then Jordan made his driving layup to bring the Bulls within a point. The key play, Peterson felt, was going to come on the next defensive sequence, when Utah came down court with the ball. Peterson was certain that he could track Jordan's thinking: he would know that Utah would go to Malone, hoping for a basket, or, at least, two foul shots. He had seen his friend so often in the past in this same role, encouraged by Dean Smith, the North Carolina coach, to play the defensive rover. Peterson thought that Michael, knowing the likely Utah offense every bit as well as Malone and Stockton, would try to make a move on Malone.

As soon as Malone got the ball, Jordan was there. Sure where the ball was going and how Malone was going to hold it, he sneaked in behind him for the steal. Jordan's poise at this feverish moment was fascinating: as he made his move behind Malone, he had the discipline to extend his body to the right and thus get the perfect angle, so that when he swiped at the ball he would not foul. "Karl never saw me coming," Jordan said afterward. There were 18.9 seconds left on the clock.

The crowd, Jordan remembered, got very quiet. That was, he said later, the moment for him. The moment, he explained, was what all Phil Jackson's Zen Buddhism stuff, as he called it, was about: how to focus and concentrate and be ready for that critical point in a game, so that when it arrived you knew exactly what you wanted to do and how to do it, as if you had already lived through it. When it happened, you were supposed to be in control, use the moment, and not panic and let the moment use you. Jackson liked the analogy of a cat waiting for a mouse, patiently biding its time, until the mouse, utterly unaware, finally came forth.

The play at that instant, Jordan said, seemed to unfold very slowly, and he saw everything with great clarity, as Jackson had wanted him to: the way the Utah defense was setting up, and what his teammates were doing. He knew exactly what he was going to do. "I never doubted myself," Jordan said later. "I never doubted the whole game."

Incredibly, Utah decided not to double-team Jordan. Steve Kerr, in for Harper, was on the wing to Jordan's right, ready to take a pass and score if Stockton left him to double Jordan. Kukoc had to be watched on the left. Rodman, starting out at the top of the foul circle, made a good cut to the basket, and suddenly Bryon Russell was isolated, one on one, with Jordan. Jordan had let the clock run down from about fifteen seconds to about eight. Then Russell made a quick reach for the ball, and Jordan started his drive, moving to his right as if to go to the basket. Russell went for the bait, and suddenly Jordan pulled up. Russell was already sprawling to his left, aided by a light tap on the rear from Jordan as he stopped and squared up and shot. It was a great shot, a clear look at the basket, and his elevation and form were perfect. Normally, Jordan said later, he tended to fade back just as he took his jumper for that extra degree of separation between him and his defender, but, because his previous shots had been falling short, he did not fade away this time—nor did he need to, for Russell, faked to the floor, was desperately trying to regain his position.

Roy Williams, the Kansas coach who had heard about Michael when he was back in Laney High School, in Wilmington, North Carolina, was at his camp for high-school players, in Kansas, and was watching the game in the coaches' locker room. He remembered saying after the steal, as Jordan was bringing the ball up court, that some Utah defender had better run over and double him quickly or it was going to be over. You forced someone else to take the last shot, he thought—you did not allow Michael to go one on one for it. But no one doubled him. What Williams remembered about the final shot was the exquisite quality of Jordan's form, and how long he held his follow-through after releasing the ball; it was something that coaches always taught their players. Watching him now, as he seemed to stay up in the air for an extra moment, defying gravity, Williams thought of it as Michael Jordan's way of willing the ball through the basket.

There is a photograph of that moment, Jordan's last shot, in the magazine *ESPN*, taken by the photographer Fernando Medina. It is in color and covers two full pages, and it shows Russell struggling to regain position, Jordan at the peak of his jump, the ball high up on its arc and about to descend, and the clock displaying the time remaining in the game—6.6 seconds. What is remarkable is the closeup it offers of so many Utah fans. Though the ball has not yet reached the basket, the game appears over to them. The anguish—the certitude of defeat—is on their faces. In a number of instances their hands are extended as if to stop Jordan and keep the shot from going in. Some of the fans have already put their hands to their faces, as in a moment of grief. There is one exception to this: a young boy on the right, in a Chicago Bulls shirt, whose arms are already in the air in a victory call.

The ball dropped cleanly through. Utah had one more chance, but Stockton missed the last shot and the Bulls won, 87–86. Jordan had carried his team once again. He had scored forty-five points, and he had scored his team's last eight points. The Chicago coaches, it turned out, had been prophetic in their sense of what would happen in the fourth quarters of this series, and which player would be able to create for himself with the game on the line. In the three close games, two of them in Salt Lake City, Jordan played much bigger than Malone—averaging thirteen points in the fourth quarter to Malone's three. Jordan should be remembered, Jerry Sloan said afterward, "as the greatest player who ever played the game." ♦

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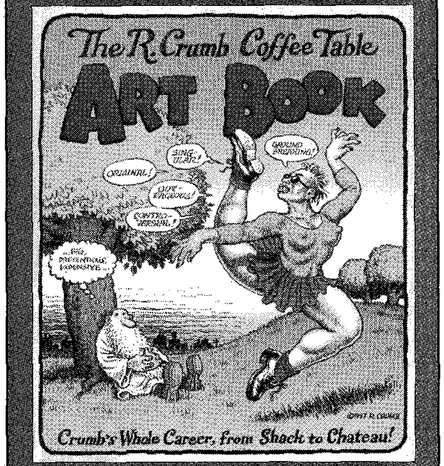
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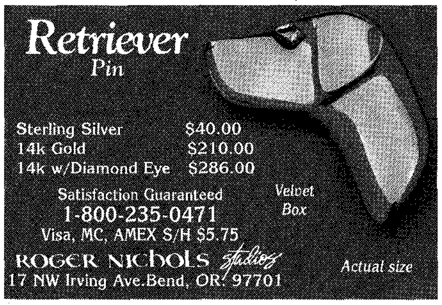
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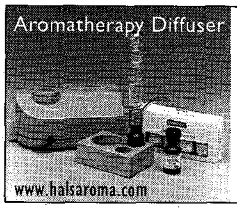
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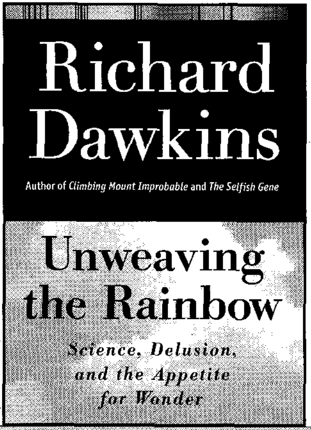

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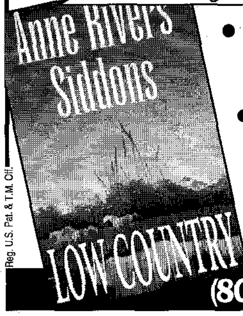

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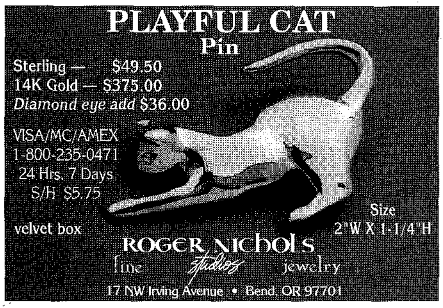

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ANNALS OF LARGESSE

# THE PERFECT GIFT

*Why everyone in Hollywood is worried.*

BY TAD FRIEND

The giving of a gift can be a simple act of generosity, motivated solely by the desire to delight a fellow human being. That's the bedtime-story version of giving, anyway. But in every society gift-giving often has about it an element of subtle manipulation, of feudal submission or lordly condescension, even of selfishness: "Give and ye shall receive." And nowhere has the culture of giving developed so exquisitely as in the capital of the entertainment industry, where gift ideas are plotted as anxiously and intensively as screenplays.

In Hollywood, the giving of gifts—cell phones, cashmere sweaters, spa weekends, ocelots—marks not only the usual milestones (births and birthdays, engagements and weddings) but also those peculiar to the industry (the start of production and its "wrap," premières and awards) and reaches a climax at Christmastime. The "talent relations" coördinator for a major studio told me that each year she spends nearly a million dollars of the studio's money on gifts, and is currently mailing a thousand meticulously researched Christmas presents. If the Magi had fussed over their gifts this much, they'd never have made it to Bethlehem. ("Everyone's probably getting the kid frankincense—the joint's a stable!" "Myrrh? That's *so* 10 B.C.")

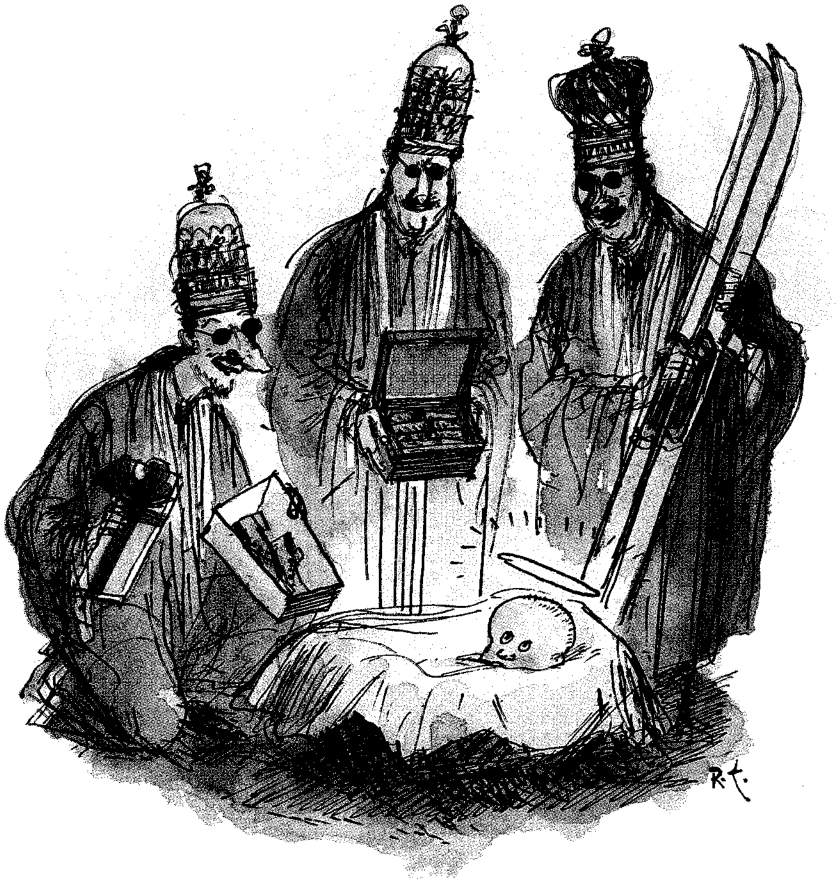
"We go to these lengths because all of us who go into show business are children," the talent manager Bernie Brillstein said to me. "We like presents, and we don't like to share them. Everyone loves a ride on a corporate jet, because you don't have to pay your manager, lawyer, or agent any part of it—it's something for you alone."

In Hollywood, you don't become a grownup when you put away childish things, such as expensive gifts. You become a grownup when you start examining the messages underlying the childish things. "The amount of gifts you get is precisely proportionate to the amount of money you have the authority to spend," David Kissinger, a senior vice-president at USA Television, told me. "One of the more brazen and absurd experiences I've had happened when I got this job after being out of work. All of a sudden I was receiving baskets of muffins—Mrs. Beasley's muffins are a totem of business appreciation here—from the same people who hadn't returned my calls before. The cards would say, 'Let's do lots of business together.' Read, 'Give me lots of money.' "

Presents are business by other means. "Gifts are about advantage, about calculation," the television and film producer Rob Scheidlinger explained. "You can buy someone a Leica camera for seven hundred dollars and make a remarkable impression when the business between you is worth a million dollars." A bad gift is a lot like—and often worse than—a failed negotiation. The six stars of "Friends" were unhappy last month when NBC and Warner Bros. commemorated the show's hundredth episode by sending them nothing more than paperweights. Now they want their salaries raised from a hundred thousand dollars per episode to two hundred thousand.

The well-known entertainment lawyer Bert Fields often presents his clients with copies of their own scripts bound in leather. It's simple, and it's a way of assuring the recipient that, say, "The Waterboy" belongs on the high shelf with Swift and Seneca. With so much at stake, you want to make sure that the gift doesn't inadvertently convey the wrong message. Universal Studios sent Coach suitcases to the principals of "Primary Colors" at the beginning of the shoot. "It was a terrific bag," Emma Thompson told me, "but a very strange message. I said to Mike Nichols"—the film's director—" 'Do they want us to leave?' "

Despite a similarly ambiguous symbolism, shoes are a surprisingly popular new gift item. Their effectiveness was demonstrated early last spring, when Madonna was the guest on "Oprah" The two stars spent the hour trading glum aperçus about yoga, therapy, and the pitfalls of materialism. "I have so many clothes and pairs of shoes," Madonna brooded, "sometimes it makes me sick to my stomach." (This from a woman who once told an interviewer that Manolo Blahnik shoes were deeply satisfying, because "they last longer than sex.") Finally, the singer dropped the Shaker posturing and handed Winfrey a little gift—a pair of three-hundred-dollar Prada mules. Both women grew giddy. "You know I love shoes, girl!" Winfrey yelled, skipping around the stage in her new satin slippers. "We're spiritual, but we love our shoes!"



RICHARD THOMPSON

"Shoes are the right price range for the kiss-ass gift—hundreds rather than thousands," a film producer explained to me. "It's a luxury item, but it's kind of personal, and it's not like giving a pair of pants, where there are all sorts of size issues." The only trick is to have one's assistant huddle with the recipient's assistant in order to determine the correct size. (Hollywood assistants always have sizes on file.) Tony Krantz, the co-chairman of Imagine Television, gave Gucci shoes to several actors who had done a read-through on a pilot script. "A young actor isn't going to spend three hundred dollars on a pair of Guccis," Krantz said. "But he'll be happy to have them. And, if they're the wrong size, it's an easy exchange."

The message is suave: I'm parting the velvet ropes, squiring you into the lush life. Stick with me, and you'll dance at the palace (Cinderella's glass slippers) and be invulnerable to attack (Dorothy's ruby slippers). The Endeavor Agency recently made a Christmas gift of black suède Van sneakers to all its clients. Agency minions glued Endeavor logos over the Van name on every pair. Most of the agency's clients peeled off the new logos, preferring to wear the mildly glue-scarred original shoes.

Ari Emanuel, an agent at Endeavor, has given shoes in his successful pursuit of such prospective clients as the screenwriter Aaron Sorkin, and Sorkin has himself purchased Manolo Blahniks for an ABC executive and other shoes for the female members of the cast of his new sitcom, "Sports Night." He said that his gifts were meant to circumvent an old theatre superstition, which holds that it's bad luck to buy shoes between the first day of rehearsal and opening night. The belief is that if you buy footwear for yourself—broadcasting your prosperity—you vex the spirit of Thespis, often called the father of Greek tragedy, and he'll disrupt your performance. To this day, members of Actors' Equity, who are presumed to be pounding the pavement in search of work, are entitled to one free pair of shoes a year.

THE illusion of omniscience cultivated by Hollywood gift-givers was maintained in a masterly way by the agent Michael Ovitz, who ran Creative Artists Agency and now heads a new management company. Ovitz, never reluctant to take credit for shifts in the Zeitgeist, told me, "The giving culture began in 1974, when we started C.A.A. We were the first to give clients start-date gifts, which reminded them that we were in business together." Many clients signed with the agency simply for Ovitz's largesse, which spilled out of C.A.A.'s special gift-wrapping room: rare first editions from the Heritage Bookshop, rare coins, cars, and art. "It's about giving the unexpected, perfect thing," Ovitz said. "Let's do you," he went on, "agenting" me as an example. "Do you have a hobby?" Golf, I said. "O.K., there's a new titanium driver, it's very hard to get, it gives you twenty extra yards even if you're a goofball. So I'd happily spend the three hundred and fifty dollars on it, because it would light up your face."

The official gift-chooser at one studio explained, "It's very hard to shop for these people, obviously, because they already have everything. Tom Hanks is easy, because he loves the Beatles and he loves space. But you can only do something in each of those areas once, make a note in the file, and move on." She sighed. "Otherwise, if they're older, we can reach them with a big-ticket item for their grandkids—a huge Lego set or an electric car. Or, if they're younger, you ask the agent (A) 'Does he drink?' If he's in A.A., it's so insulting to send a case of wine. (B) 'Hob-

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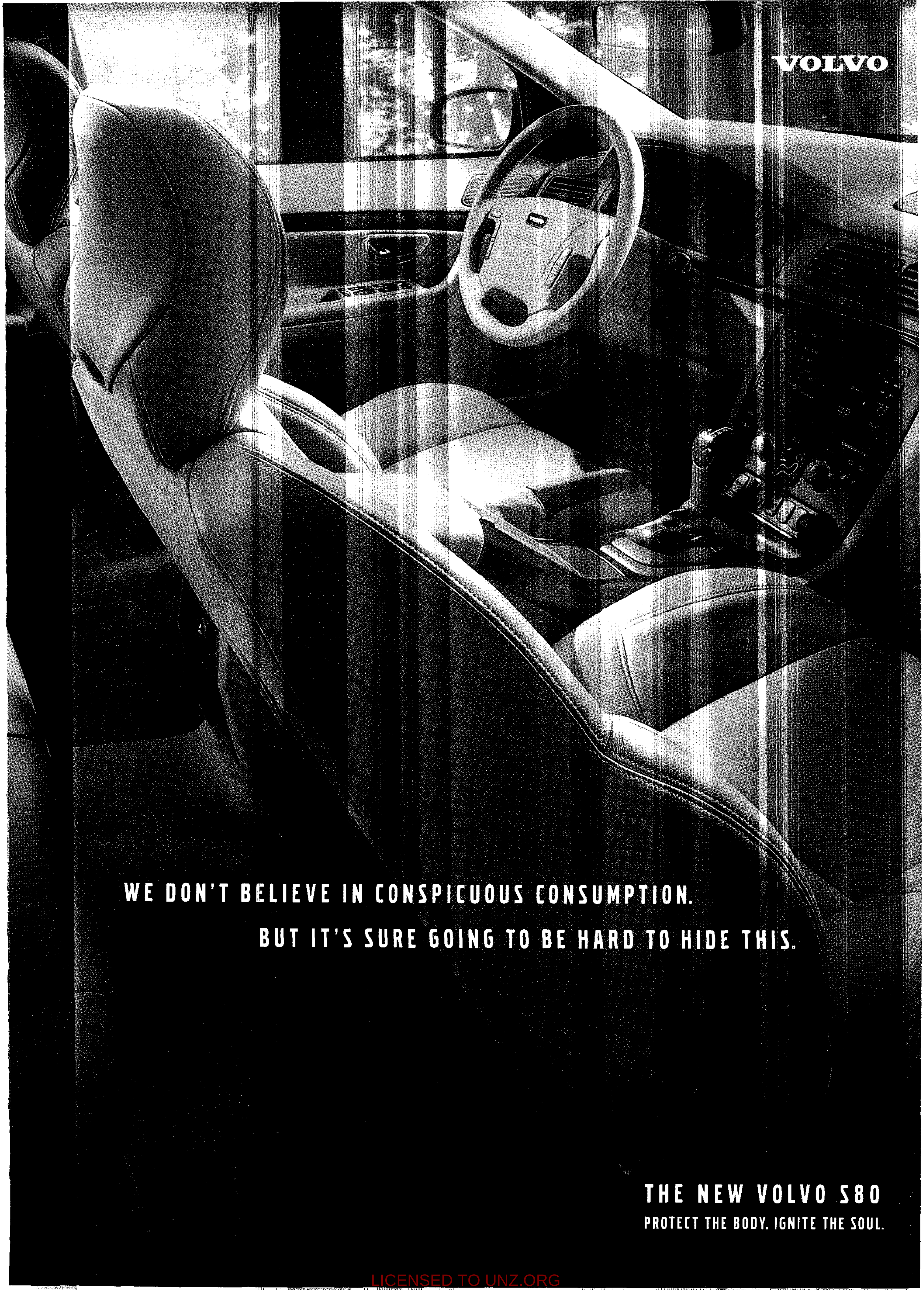
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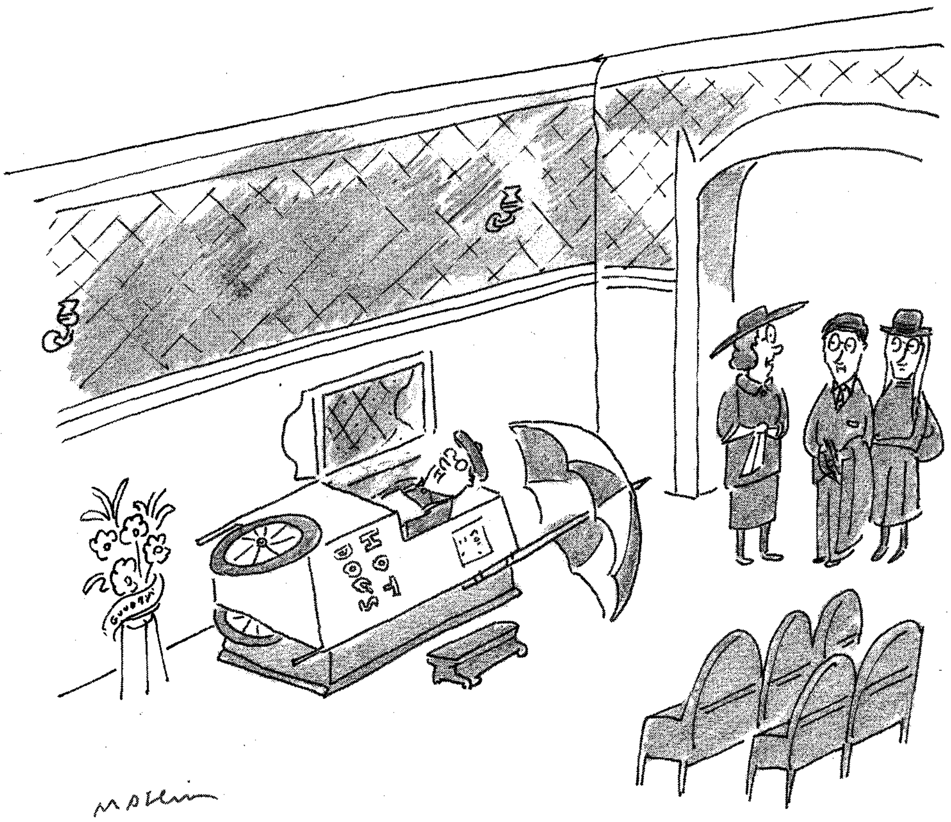

*"If I heard it once, I heard it a thousand times. 'Margie,' he'd say, 'when I die, the business dies with me.'"*

• •

bies?' Because golf lessons or flying lessons or salsa lessons work beautifully. (C) 'Clothes?' You can always pop into Gucci. (D) 'Do they have a garden?' A tree with a wheelbarrow and a watering can makes a nice statement: 'We want to grow with you.' But you have to be so careful. If I say to an agent, 'I'm giving your client a wetsuit because he's taking up surfing—what size is he?,' the agent's assistant will very often call back and say, 'Actually, *he's* now giving the wetsuit.' Agents steal your idea, because it's the best they've heard."

Several years ago, while two writers were pitching a movie to a Disney executive, the executive's assistant burst in, frantic about the present the studio had bought to commemorate Mel Gibson's appendix operation. "We've got a big problem!" the assistant said. "Mel already has a humidor!" The executive became "very distressed," one of the writers recalled. "He said, 'What kind of car does Mel drive? Maybe a scale model of it? . . . Nah, that would look too cheap.' Our meeting was over."

The competitive flaunting of fake intimacy is epitomized by "wooing gifts"—presents meant to close a deal. When the writer and director John Waters was shopping his script for a movie about fifties hoods, "Cry-Baby," Dawn Steele, the then head of Columbia Pictures, sent him a leather jacket, and other studios bombarded him, he said, savoring the piquancy, with "rare books about juvenile delinquency." When one screenwriter was looking for a new agency, and happened to mention to a William Morris agent that he liked Chef Boy-Ar-Dee, several cases of the canned pasta arrived instantly on his doorstep. The writer ended up signing with Endeavor, which had already given him a pair of expensive sneakers, sports tickets, soup from Jerry's Deli, a big dinner, and what was purported to be a homemade cheesecake.

The rote nature of the machine's intimacy was definitively illustrated by a series of gifts sent to Donick Cary, who writes for "The Simpsons." When Cary moved to Los Angeles, his agents at C.A.A. sent him a Weber grill for his new back yard. Three months later, on his birthday, a gift box from C.A.A. looked remarkably similar, and, indeed, it was another Weber grill. The following year, Cary moved to a new house, and the C.A.A. gift department, searching for the *cadeau juste*, triumphantly produced a third Weber grill.

THE ne-plus-ultra Hollywood gift is, as it is on "Let's Make a Deal," a *brand . . . new . . . car!* Automobiles carry a lot of baggage. Like the car your parents give you when you head off to college, the Hollywood car promises the recipient freedom while forcefully reminding him who is paying the bills. Sherry Lansing, the president of Paramount Pictures, explained after she'd given Mercedes-Benz 500 SLs to the principals of the film "The Firm," "It's not about the cars. It's the relationships." She was acknowledging that the cars were barter—down payments on future projects. It's all quid pro quo.

This form of "What have you done for me lately?" generosity was deftly lampooned in the 1988 movie "Scrooged." Bill Murray played Frank Cross, a stingy network president, who has to decide whether the people on his Christmas list should receive a VCR or a bath towel with the network logo:

SECRETARY: Glenn Glenn Whitaker?
CROSS: What was the last rating on "Police Hill"?
SECRETARY (*cautiously*): 5.2 Nielsen, a 7 share, and a TV Q for 3.
CROSS (*outraged*): Towel!

Generic gifts, like the network towel, are painful to receive. "To spend fifty or seventy dollars on champagne, which flows in Hollywood like water, is thoughtless," Michael Ovitz noted. And Dan Klores, who runs a big public-relations firm, advised, "Beware the flower sender—it's a thoughtless gift from someone who has just treated you mean, and then sends flowers when you come through." Mingy gifts like these epitomize Melanie Klein's theory of giving. Klein, a psychoanalyst, suggested that the urge to give is often atonement for an overwhelming urge to destroy.

Some of Hollywood's most legendary gifts appear to confirm Klein's insight. Michael Ovitz, unhappy with a *Variety* story about C.A.A., sent the reporter, Anita Busch, a bottle of MSG, knowing that she was allergic. (Ovitz said later that it was a joke.) The message seemed clear, though: I wish you would die. Still, in Hollywood the gesture could be taken as strangely flattering: you are important enough that I have taken time from my busy schedule to wish that you would die.

Even gifts that aren't manifestly hostile can cause trouble. After last season's final episode of "Veronica's Closet," the show's star, Kirstie Alley, assembled the cast and crew and produced dozens of canaries in individual cages—gifts for all. "When the bird sings," she told them, "it will remind you of the song we have all sung here this year." One recipient took his sickly bird to a vet, who seemed familiar with the problem. "Ah, yes," he said. "One of the Kirstie Alley canaries." It died soon thereafter.

A Hollywood gift is rarely taken at face value. "What you really use these gifts for is as a value gauge," Emma Thompson said. "While you're measuring another star's trailer size, in you peek to see how big *her* mound of bananas on the table is. Obviously, Cher or Travolta is going to get a bigger fruit basket than I am. But then you know exactly where you stand, and how full of rage and envy you should be."

A NEW kind of gift, the charitable-donation card, has recently become a Christmas mainstay. These cards inform one, "In lieu of a gift, a donation has been made in your name" to a particular charity, such as Cure Autism Now, or the U.C.L.A. Cranial-Facial Unit. They're popular with the givers because they solve many of the perennial problems of Hollywood gift-giving: they don't require strenuous individual research, they don't add to the industrywide surfeit of smoked turkeys and "Everybody Loves Raymond" butter dishes, and they do some social good.

Yet many people hate the cards even more than the logo-laden mementos. "Studios should unite the two bad gift ideas," the screenwriter Paul Rudnick suggested, "and give their cheap memorabilia directly to the homeless." Recipients of donation cards never know how much money was given and how many cards were sent out—and donors have been known to send out a hundred cards after giving only a hundred dollars. A few years ago, the television writers Andy and Susan Borowitz sent cards that said, "In lieu of a gift, a donation has been made in your name to The Borowitz Foundation, a charitable foundation established in 1995 for the purpose of giving gifts to Andy and Susan Borowitz." In the climate of donation-card gloom, "about fifty per cent of the people missed the joke," Andy Borowitz told me.

Furthermore, unlike a business gift the charitable donation made in someone's name can be deducted from the giver's taxable income. And there's nothing in it for the recipient. (C.A.A. sought to address these concerns last year by buying sports and art equipment for three schools and then sending more than fifteen hundred clients and associates silver-framed photographs of what, precisely, had been given in their names. Thus Tom Hanks received a photograph of an eight-year-old boy playing the tuba that Hanks had given, along with a handwritten thank-you note from the boy.)

Donation-card givers misperceive what Hollywood is all about. It's not a family drawn closer by giving—as, say, the Trobriand Islanders are when they ritually circulate their armbands and shell necklaces. It's a marketplace disguised as a family. A marketplace functions only when its commodities are appropriately valued, and in this case the commodities are people—people who judge their value by the gifts they receive.

Dennis Klein, a television-comedy writer, said, "Those cards trigger the eternally paranoid nature of show business, where you always feel reamed or tricked. You get one and you don't know whether a generous person has thought soulfully about helping deserving black children or if someone who in fact disdains the afflicted, including gullible TV-comedy writers, is roaring with laughter somewhere." ♦

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## PROFILE

# THE C.E.O. OF COMEDY

*What's behind the breezy ease of Bob Hope? A precisely plotted career that invented the comic franchise.*

### BY JOHN LAHR

WHEN Bob Hope looks back on the long lap of honor that is his life, he likes to tell a story about his vaudeville beginnings. In about 1928, not long after he'd started doing gags onstage, he was playing the Orpheum Theatre in Evansville, Indiana, and he noticed that his newly minted name had been wrongly billed as “Ben Hope, Comedian.” In Hope's gruelling slog to stardom, which he didn't reach until he was in his late thirties, his name underwent a number of transformations. He had entered the world, in 1903, as Leslie Townes Hope, but once he'd found the stage, as a song-and-dance man, the name changed from “Leslie” to the more masculine “Lester.” When comedy gradually emerged as Hope's meal ticket, the name mutated again. Although his clippings have a few references to “Bill” and “Bobby,” he settled on “Bob Hope”—not just because it read well on a marquee but because it had, he said, “more ‘Hiya, fellas’ in it.” So when he saw the Orpheum's misprint the cocksure young comic buttonholed the theatre manager and upbraided him for the mistake. As Hope recalls their exchange, on an A&E Biography film, “ ‘What's your name?’ the manager said. I said, ‘*Bob* Hope.’ He said, ‘Who knows?’ ”

Hope, who has a self-confessed “hatred of anonymity,” kept a picture of the Evansville billing in his archive. “The fascinating thing to me is that he has a picture of it,” his elder son, Tony, told me about his father, who stopped performing in 1995 and for the past few years has not been up to giving interviews. “He knew that in twenty years it would be a historic picture. That's his foresight. That's his drive. ‘Everybody's gonna know who Bob Hope is.’ ” Hope is unique among the great entertainers of the century in having been at some point in his long, well-organized career No. 1 in radio, in film, and in television. “I've a terrible fear of being hijacked to a country where they've never heard of me,” he joked in 1970. It was a nightmare that came to pass only once—when he visited Russia, in the late fifties. “I don't mind being killed, but ignored—never.”

Since the nineteen-forties, the name “Bob Hope” has been part of the Western world's ozone. He has lived to see it not just in lights but in many other incarnations. There is the U.S.N.S. Bob Hope, the second-largest ship in the Navy; the C-17 jet fighter the Spirit of Bob Hope; G.I. Bob, a popular Hasbro doll; the Bob Hope/Chrysler Desert Golf Classic, in Palm Springs; Bob Hope High School for the physically handicapped, in Port Arthur, Texas; and the Hope Memorial Bridge, in Cleveland, Ohio (his father, who was a stonemason, worked on it). There are Bob Hope Theatres in Dallas and in Eltham, England, which was his birthplace; and a Bob Hope Street and Off-Ramp in Burbank, near NBC, where his sixty-year association with the network, which ended in 1997, has earned him a place in the “Guinness Book of World Records” for the longest contract with a single network. Hope's name has even been affixed to the planet's animal and plant life: the Bob Hope prize steer, the Bob Hope rose, the Bob Hope fern, which is green on top with black roots. “You've captured me completely,” he wrote to the Chicago Horticultural Society, which cultivated the plant.

At ninety-five, Hope is nearly as old as the century, and he personifies its brash deliriums. His obsession with output, aggrandizement, and fame belongs to the modern era, particularly in this country. Hope, who joked in the late sixties that he left England when he was four “because I found out I could never be King,” has established his own American kingdom. He still sends out six thousand Christmas cards a year. His 1998 press kit—“95 Years of Hope”—includes news of a congressional resolution making him an Honorary Veteran and of his receiving an honorary British knighthood; some publicity photographs; and a joke sheet about his getting old, which reads, in part, “It feels great to be 95. I mean, for those parts of me that still have feeling.” Nowadays, Hope can't see very well and frequently refuses to wear a hearing aid (“They can hear what *I'm* saying,” he says), but the celebrity machine he put in place more than half a century ago grinds efficiently on. Hope appears in another “Guinness Book of World Records” entry, as the world's “most decorated civilian.” “I feel very humble,” he said to President Kennedy when he was awarded a Congressional Gold Medal in 1963, “but I think I have the strength of character to fight it.” His appetite for adulation remains unabashed; even in his dotage, he is still, as he famously sang, “Available”:

If you're handing out a plaque
Or a special little statue
I'll go home and pack
And I'll soon be looking at you!

JUST two years before a very young Hope arrived at Ellis Island, in 1908, dressed in two sets of clothes to save luggage, Henry Adams wrote in his autobiography, about the American century's new dynamism and prosperity, “All the new forces condensed into corporations were demanding a new type of man—a man with ten times the endurance, energy, will and mind of the old type.” The great vaudeville clowns who preceded Hope—Chaplin, Buster Keaton, the Marx Brothers, Weber and Fields, Eugene and Willie Howard, Bobby Clark—acted out the deracinating momentum of the new century in their frenzy and their pratfalls. They were a noisy, rumpled, constitutionally unclubbable bunch. Their baggy excess and their dialects broadcast their separation from the mainstream: they were parodies of the new corporate energy.

Hope, on the other hand, personi-

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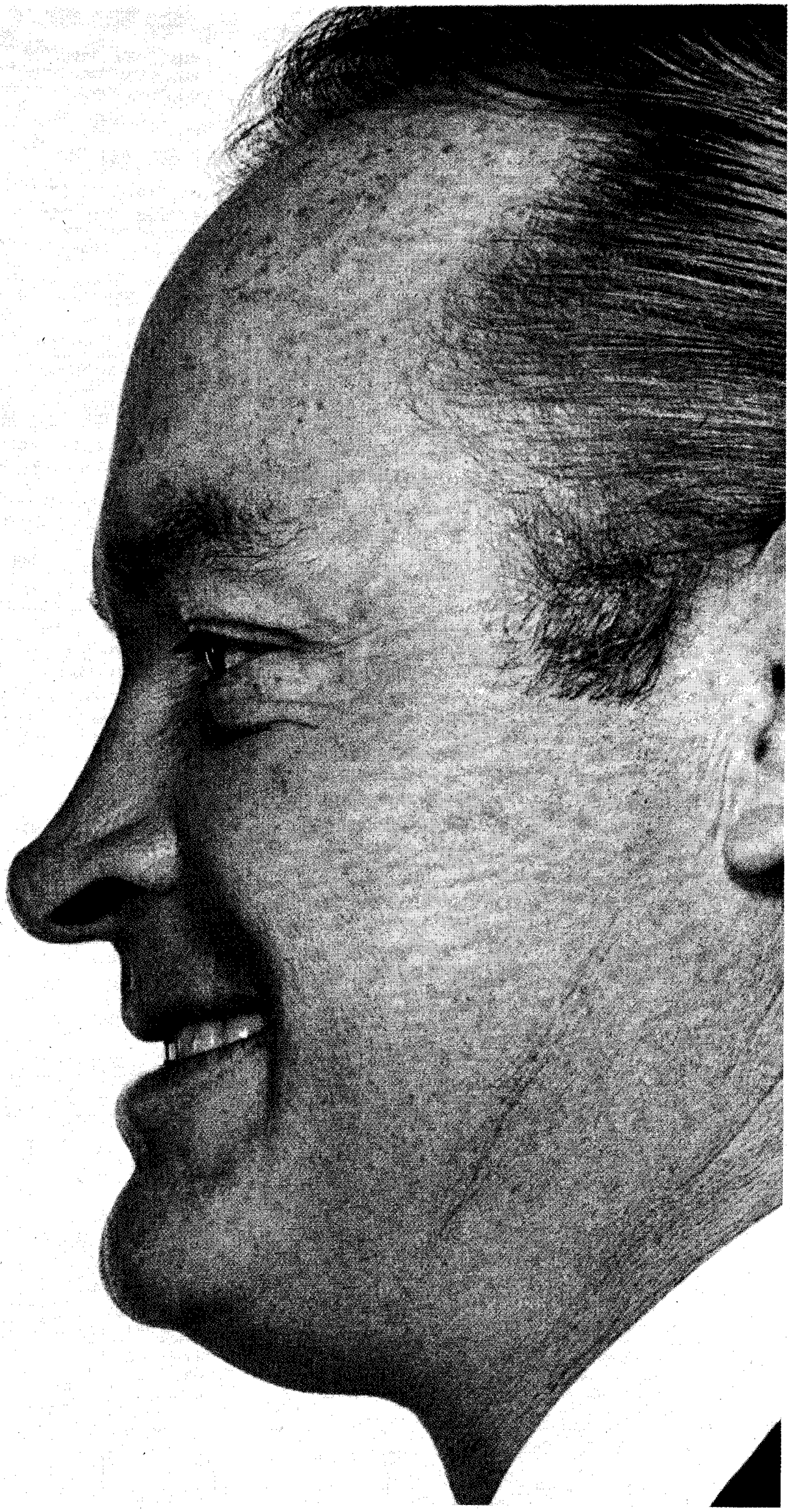

*Hope's product was efficient, mass-produced, omnipresent, iconic. Photograph by Philippe Halsman, 1950.*

*Bob Hope with Bing Crosby, 1962; riding on the Paramount lot, 1941; jitterbugging for American troops in England, 1943; and*

fied it. He was a bright package of assimilated poise and pragmatism—the all-American average guy. There was no hint of the streets or the Old Country in his patter. "I simply can't tell a dialect joke," he says in his 1954 memoir, "Bob Hope's Own Story: Have Tux, Will Travel." In their manic bravado, the older generation of funnymen gave off a whiff of immigrant desperation and sadness at what had been left behind. Hope was all future. The wrinkles had been pressed out of his suits and out of his personality. He was an anxiety-free, up-to-the-minute, fast-talking go-getter on holiday. Dapper, streamlined, and cunning, Hope was the first corporate comedian. He gave what one NBC vice-president called "a lot of extra value for his money." He attended sales conventions, schmoozed the press, golfed with the corporate bigwigs. In his radio days, between 1938 and 1956, he was usually photographed behind an NBC mike; he found a way of linking the sponsors' brand names with his own ("This is Bob Pepsodent/Chrysler/Lever Brothers Hope"). Even in many of his seventy-odd films, Hope made sure that the jokes mythologized his corporate bosses. In "Road to Morocco" (1942), when he is perched on a camel behind Bing Crosby, singing the title song, it's Crosby who boasts "For any villains we may meet / We haven't any fear," and Hope who invokes the blessings of management: "Paramount will protect us / 'Cause we're signed for five more years."

When the Old Guard clowns, like W. C. Fields and the Marx Brothers, were brought into the corporate fold, they fought with it continually or, like Keaton, were destroyed by it. Hope embraced the corporate idea and turned himself into a kind of comic franchise. "He discovered a formula for comedy that was better than what anyone else was doing, and he sought to expand it, not in depth, but in breadth," Tony Hope wrote me. "He put together a machine that spread the word to ninety per cent of the globe that when you said 'ad-lib' or 'standup' you meant Bob Hope, or a cheap imitation of him." As Hope said in the mid-fifties, "Between television, my daytime and nighttime radio shows, pictures, and personal appearances, I'm also working on a plan where, when you close your eyes, I appear on the inside of your eyelids." NBC, Paramount, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and the United States military establishment were his co-producers, and those alliances made him a very rich man: conservative estimates of his wealth—at one time he owned a large portion of the San Fernando Valley, Malibu, and Palm Springs—are said to be between a hundred million and two hundred million dollars. (In 1983, *Forbes* put Hope's worth at more than two hundred million dollars, a figure he loudly disputed.) His product, like the corporations he served, was efficient, mass-produced, omnipresent, iconic. In his hands, laughter became an art of non-friction; his jokes went down as easily as Coca-Cola, and he, too, was the pause that refreshed.

Like any shrewd C.E.O., Hope believed in careful product planning. He employed as many as five press agents at a time, and he brought his particular combination of gall and good-enough looks onstage with a distinctive swagger: chest out, body pitched forward on the balls of his feet, hands cupped be-

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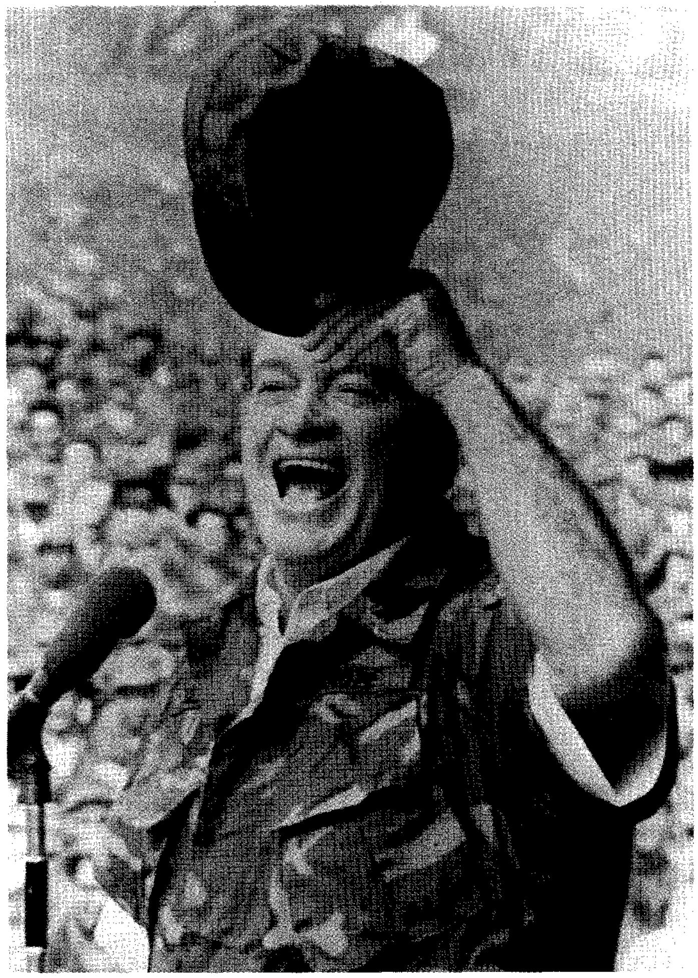


*entertaining in Vietnam, 1969. Hope's work for the armed services gave his comedy something it would otherwise have lacked: a mission.*

hind his swinging arms—as Jack Benny quipped, like a headwaiter trying to get a tip. "He came on as if he were carrying a great weight of almost civic dignity in front of him," Sir Laurence Olivier once told the BBC. "It's very amusing." Hope also established a kind of joke factory, which has remained intact from the late thirties until today. (Even now, he keeps a skeleton crew of two writers on retainer.) "I believe I was the first of the comedians to admit openly that I employed writers," Hope told William Faith in 1981, in "Bob Hope: A Life in Comedy," which is perhaps the best book about him. "In the early years of radio, comedians fostered the illusion that all of those funny sayings came right out of their own skulls."

In the course of the last half century, eighty-eight jokesmiths—sometimes as many as thirteen at a time—have been on Hope's payroll, and have provided him with upward of a million jokes. ("Hope?" Groucho Marx once said. "Hope is not a comedian. He just translates what others write for him.") "When you signed on for Bob Hope, you were at his beck and call seven days a week," I was told by Melville Shavelson, one of his first joke writers, who later went on to co-write two of Hope's strongest films, "Sorrowful Jones" and "The Seven Little Foys," which he also directed. Hope's reliance on writers became part of his shtick. "I keep an earthquake emergency kit in my house," he said. "It's filled with food, water, and a half a dozen writers." Among the writers, one of Hope's nicknames was Piggy. "Hope was a glutton," says Hal Kanter, who wrote not only jokes but also seven movies for Hope. " 'More, more, more. I want more jokes. I want more dates to play. I want more ice cream. I want more women. I want more applause.' " Hope was notorious for calling his jokesmiths at any time of the day or night. The writers' acronym for this sudden intrusion was "NAFT"—"need a few things." Larry Gelbart, who began writing for Hope in 1948, at the age of twenty, recalls one style of Hope phone call: " 'Oh, you didn't wake me, Bob.' Four-thirty in the morning. He'd say, 'Lar . . . ?' 'Yeah, Bob?' Then, silence, silence, silence. These extremely long pauses, which made you feel you oughta say something. He had this very funny way on the phone." In later years, when Hope was calling his writers he formed the habit of not identifying himself or saying "Hello" or "How ya doin'?" He'd just say, "Thrill me."

Jokes were not merely Hope's livelihood but a defining part of his identity. "Bob was a manufactured personality, constructed out of jokes," says Sherwood Schwartz, another of his early radio writers, who went on to create and produce "Gilligan's Island" and "The Brady Bunch." In time, Hope's writers were called upon to provide jokes even for his golf tournaments and his dinner parties. One recent writer, Martha Bolton, remembers a phone message from her boss: "Hi, this is Bob Hope. I'm trying to find my writers. Gene's off speaking somewhere. Mills is golfing. Si and Freddie are gone and just have their answering machine on. And you're probably out shopping. . . . Didn't I used to have a career?"

IN May of this year, Hope announced the donation of his archive of jokes, radio broadcasts, video master tapes, film and radio scripts, photographs, and clippings books to the Library of

Congress, along with three and a half million dollars to preserve the collection and to outfit a thirteen-hundred-square-foot room in the Jefferson Building which is to be called the Bob Hope Gallery of American Entertainment. Hope is careful about the company he keeps: his gallery will be next to the Gershwin Room. Until recently, a good portion of his memorabilia was collected in an outbuilding that served as the office for Hope and his staff. It sits about fifty paces from his Toluca Lake home—a six-and-three-quarter-acre former walnut grove, on the wrong side of the Hollywood Hills, which Hope bought in 1937 for about forty thousand dollars. He and his wife of sixty-four years, Dolores, with whom he has four adopted children, have turned it into a luxuriant oasis of rolling manicured lawns, dominated by a one-hole pitch-and-putt golf course whose sand trap and green are visible from Hope's three-room suite on the second floor. He spends much of his time there now, watching gigantic local crows mill around the orange-flagged pin.

On the surface, life at the Hopes' home goes on as usual. Gardeners primp the hibiscus and rake the leaves in the shadow of towering redwood and eucalyptus trees, which block out almost all of downtown Burbank, except for the logo of the Texaco Building, which brands part of their blue horizon above the tree line. Employees bustle from the house past a fountain filled with an exotic carrotwood tree and into the office; Hope's white German shepherds, Sno'el and Snowjob, Jr., prowl ten-foot-high hedges of blue-flowering plumbago which extend around the property and shut out the flat, blistering banality of the Valley streets. But over at the office, in the large mahogany study where Hope once met with his writers, an archivist has been at work since March cataloguing the trophies of Hope's lifetime in entertainment: three warehouses full of memorabilia, including fifty-four honorary degrees, five hundred keys to various cities, a golf club inscribed from Lana Turner, a piece of Queen Elizabeth's wedding cake, Eddy Foy's dance shoes, the propeller of an enemy plane signed by the soldiers who shot it down, and an open pack of Vietcong cigarettes and matches—the gift of a P.O.W., and one of Hope's most cherished mementos. For comedians like Hope, who have lived their lives largely in public, retirement is particularly poignant. Hope has not visited his old offices in a year, and his study has been denuded of its old sense of life and victory: the marlin over the fireplace is gone, the signed footballs from the N.F.L., the Big Ten, and the A.P. All-America teams are gone, and the four Emmy Awards have been packed away. In time, some of these artifacts will find their way to the Bob Hope Museum of Comedy, which will probably be built on a piece of property that Hope owns just opposite NBC.

In this divesting of corporate assets, the major one is the Joke File, which has been winnowed down to a select five hundred and twenty-eight thousand gags. This is Hope's treasury, and he has put a huge emotional and financial investment into it; appropriately, it's housed in an eight-by-five-foot Mosler bank vault. The archive comprises twelve four-drawer cabinets, five of them containing "keepers" that Hope has approved to be sent to Washington. It has a "Subject File for Gags," which begins with "Academy Awards, Advertising, Agriculture, Airplanes" and ends, twenty-eight pages later, with "War, Weather, Weddings, Women, Writers." Jokes are also cross-referenced within the categories. For instance, under "America" is printed: "Bicentennial, Constitution, historical American figures, progress over a hundred years, small towns, only in America, beginning. ALSO SEE HOPE SPECIAL ROUTINES (America Past, Present, Future)." Even though the contents are considered "Bob Hope jokes," he wrote very few of them: he edited them, gave voice to them, and paid tens of millions of dollars for them over the years. (Recently, the going rate has been between fifty and seventy-five dollars for an individual joke; his staff writers make between a hundred and fifty thousand and two hundred and fifty thousand dollars per year.) By contract, the jokes are Hope's intellectual property—an expression of his will, if not of his self. "The way I justify that in my own head is that the jokes are the result of a character that Hope created," says Gene Perret, who has written for Hope for nearly thirty years. "Many of the jokes that we do we wouldn't do if there were no Bob Hope."

The jokes have been retyped, without attribution, about seven to a page, onto quarto sheets of paper with the date, place, and subject in the upper left-hand corner. One picked at random from the "America" file reads:

> America. Honor America Day, 7/4/70
> Where else but in America could the Women's Liberation Movement take off their bras, then go on TV to complain about their lack of support.

From the outset, topicality was Hope's trademark. Many of the files are devoted to historical and show-biz figures. One file—an entire ream of jokes—is about Bing Crosby, his comic sidekick in the "Road" movies and the butt of a long-running public slinging match. ("I've been getting more exercise from my golf recently. I used to play a round with Crosby, now I just play around Crosby.") The files are also available on a computer database, so pages of jokes on a desired subject can be called up at the touch of a button. About certain recent historical figures, however, the system comes up curiously empty. There are no jokes in the file on Senator Joseph McCarthy, Malcolm X, or Martin Luther King, Jr., although Hope did joke about all three in their day, including one infamous gag at the 1968 Academy Awards ceremony, which had been delayed two days because of King's assassination: "About the delay . . . It didn't affect me, but it's been tough on the nominees. How would you like to spend two days in a crouch?"

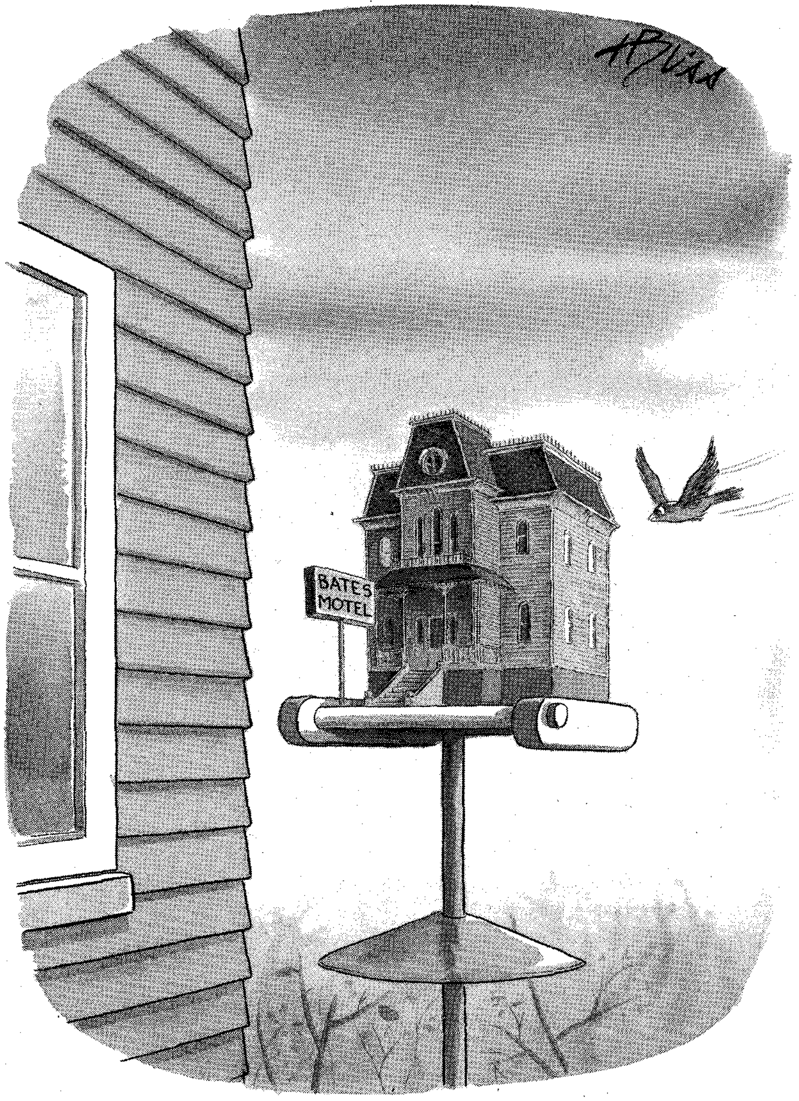
In raising a laugh, Hope's jokes rarely raise ideas. Long before Vietnam, he was a kind of one-man pacification program who disabused both the public and himself of pain. "My youth was spent in a very tough neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio," he said in a TV monologue. "If you didn't get in three fights a day, you weren't trying." Jokes provided Hope, who left school when he was nine, with an upbeat life script from which he rarely deviated. "I don't make a hobby of mental turmoil," he wrote in "Have Tux, Will Travel." "I don't think most people want that." Indeed, what the public wants is forgetfulness, and Hope, whose sharp comic persona came into focus in the thirties, at a time when America's promise seemed dim, lightened grave times. As one early radio broadcast intoned, "Strike up the band! Bob Hope's the man / Who ties the cans to woe!"

HOPE was the fifth of six boys, whose parents, even before they emigrated, had been floundering for a decade. William Henry Hope, called Harry, had married Avis Townes, the daughter of a Welsh sea captain, in 1891. Harry was a drinker and a gambler, who dreamed of becoming an architect; he shunted his ever-increasing family around England, seeking stonemasonry work and a new beginning. The Hopes moved six times before and three times after Leslie was born, and ended up in Bristol before leaving for America. (The family became United States citizens in 1920.) Avis put all her energy into her family; while Harry tried his luck in Cleveland, where his two brothers had put down roots, she was essentially a single parent. "Believe me, Avis," her profligate husband wrote to her about life in America, "when you get here, all you'll have to do is sit on the front porch and chew gum."

But Harry's reports from the New World proved exaggerated. Steel, not stone, was the material of the century's expansion, and Harry often had no work. He drowned his disappointment in drink while Avis rented out rooms in their house to make money. "I remember Dad saying, 'The United States is a fine place for women and dogs. It's a poor place for horses and men,' " Hope wrote. "He had trouble adjusting himself to this country. I don't think he ever did." Hope was the family optimist, but, according to Leslie's sister-in-law Wynn Hope, who was the wife of his brother Jim, Harry Hope was the family funnyman. "The father was the original comedian," she once told Mel Shavelson. "He drank too much, and when he didn't come home for dinner the boys would go around and they'd find him entertaining in a bar. He had a wonderful sense of humor."

Over the years, as Harry continued to drink and grew increasingly pathetic and abusive, Avis turned to her boys for both financial and emotional support. She put them all on a pedestal; each son believed himself to be her favorite. ("Mother Had Hopes" is the piquant title of a memoir that Jim Hope wrote.) Avis took Leslie to see the legendary monologuist Frank Fay, who was one of the big comedy stars of his day, and who invented the profession of vaudeville master of ceremonies—a role that Hope later adopted. "He's not half as good as you," Avis said to her son loudly, forcing Hope to slump in his seat with embarrassment. But it was Avis's fierce faith in her son's ability which gave Hope the self-confidence that Fred Allen once observed he "reeked of," and which kept him, one way or another, on that pedestal.

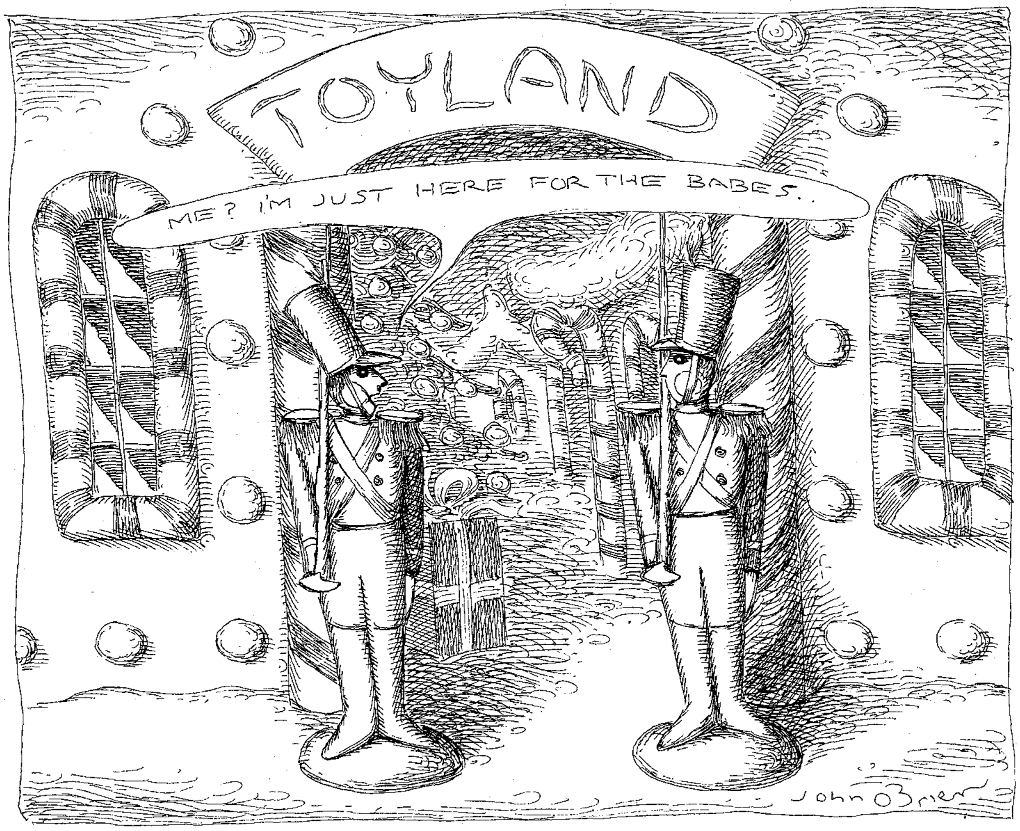
Even when he was a kid, before the stage focussed Hope's enormous, restive energy, action was the magical antidote to whatever weighed him down. ("It's no coincidence that Bob Hope's name consists of two verbs," Larry Gelbart writes in his recent memoir, "Laughing Matters," about Hope's "incredible bursts of brio.") The boy, who was a chronic sleepwalker and lived with the unhappy daily spectacle of his father cowed by fear and regret, would later be dubbed Rapid Robert. He had big ambitions but no stomach for work. As a bakery delivery boy, he shook down customers for extra cash. He hustled prize money at local footraces with a series of underhanded strategies (jumping the gun, bumping opponents), and also flirted briefly with boxing. Calling himself Packy East, he won his first amateur bout by hitting his opponent while the fellow was looking to his corner for instructions. In his next—and last—fight, Hope was knocked out. "This fellow hit me so hard I bounced right into dancing school," he told the BBC in 1973. Hope studied dancing long enough to take over his instructor's class and teach it for a while. ("Leslie Hope Will Teach You How to Dance—Clog, Soft-Shoe, Waltz-Clog, Buck and Wing, and Eccentric," read some cards he had printed.) And dance was what put Hope onstage: he was hooked from the minute he got paid for the routine he'd worked up with his willowy blond girlfriend and first partner, Mildred Rosequist, in 1920. He wrote in "Have Tux, Will Travel," "We'd make seven or eight bucks and I split it with her." In fact, he



chiselled her: according to Rosequist, he told her that their performances were for charity and pocketed the money.

Hope had larceny in his soul. As a teen-ager, he was jailed briefly for stealing tennis balls and racquets from a sporting-goods shop, according to Lawrence J. Quirk's recent biography. "Like most kids today or any day, I had to make my choice," Hope joked about his criminal record in a monologue for the Boys' Club, in 1967. "Was I going to go out and get a job and earn a living, or was I going to spend the rest of my life stealing? I decided to forget the job and stay with show business." To Hope, who referred to comedy as a "scam," laughter was another way of getting away with something. When he first began making good money on Rudy Vallee's "Fleischmann Yeast Hour," in 1930, Hope recalled, "I used to get the money and run around the corner and count it. . . . Like I was stealing it. And with my act I think mostly of theft." The shame and misery of Hope's childhood had robbed him of pleasure, ease, and a degree of playfulness; in a way, Hope "lifted" his father's sense of humor and reversed the vectors of their destinies. Harry, who worked in stone, had been overtaken by changing times, which made him obsolete; Hope, who worked in words, exploited changing times, which made him always up to date. In this psychological sleight of hand, lightness replaced gravity, profit replaced waste, and son replaced father as the family provider. As Hope's act evolved over the decades, it became the slickest of cultural hustles. "What I really am is a liar," Hope wrote in "Don't Shoot, It's Only Me," a book about his comedy. In myriad rascal roles (Turkey Jackson in "Road to Morocco," Painless Peter Potter in "The Paleface," the eponymous "Lemon Drop Kid"), or even as himself, in "Welcome to Britain," a 1943 instructional film for United States troops in England, wherein he explains English coinage to Burgess Meredith only to shortchange him, Hope enjoyed playing the impostor who admitted his larceny but still happily practiced it. Onscreen and off, he won the public's heart and picked its pocket at the same time.

ONCE, during a rehearsal for "Roberta," the 1933 musical that would make Hope a Broadway star, the show's composer, Jerome Kern, turned to him and asked, "How the hell did you get this ease on the stage?" Hope answered, "Mr. Kern, you don't know what I've been through." What Hope had been through was thirteen years of vaudeville, which taught the lessons of free enterprise: thrift, self-reliance, perseverance, innovation, and ruthlessness. It was a paradigm of Darwinian struggle, in which only the fittest performers survived the schedule, the audiences, and one another. "You came out battling and you protected yourself at all times," Hope said of vaudeville. With so many partings, disappointments, ambitions, and tempers, vaudevillians, who worked and lived in close quarters on the road, learned to keep to themselves. Hope's guard was never down. To this day, he will frequently exclaim genially, "I'nnat great?" or "I'nnat something?" Steve Allen says, "You could have said, 'I'm having a heart attack,' and he'd say, 'I'nnat something?' To me that's not an appropriate response." But it's the vestige of an old vaudeville stratagem: a show of interest which belies self-involvement. Hope was always watching himself go by: detachment added to his glamour onstage and to his solitude off it. "I don't feel that I really know him," his elder daughter, Linda Hope, who has been her father's producer for more than a decade, told me. "That's a kind of sadness for me, because I would have liked to know him better." Linda's former husband, the writer Nathaniel Lande, says of Hope, "You never get into the inner space. Too threatening. Too vulnerable. I don't think anybody has ever gotten there. It's undiscovered." He adds, "And once you get there, there may be nothing there. We'll never know."


TOYLAND
ME? I'M JUST HERE FOR THE BABES.
John O'Brien

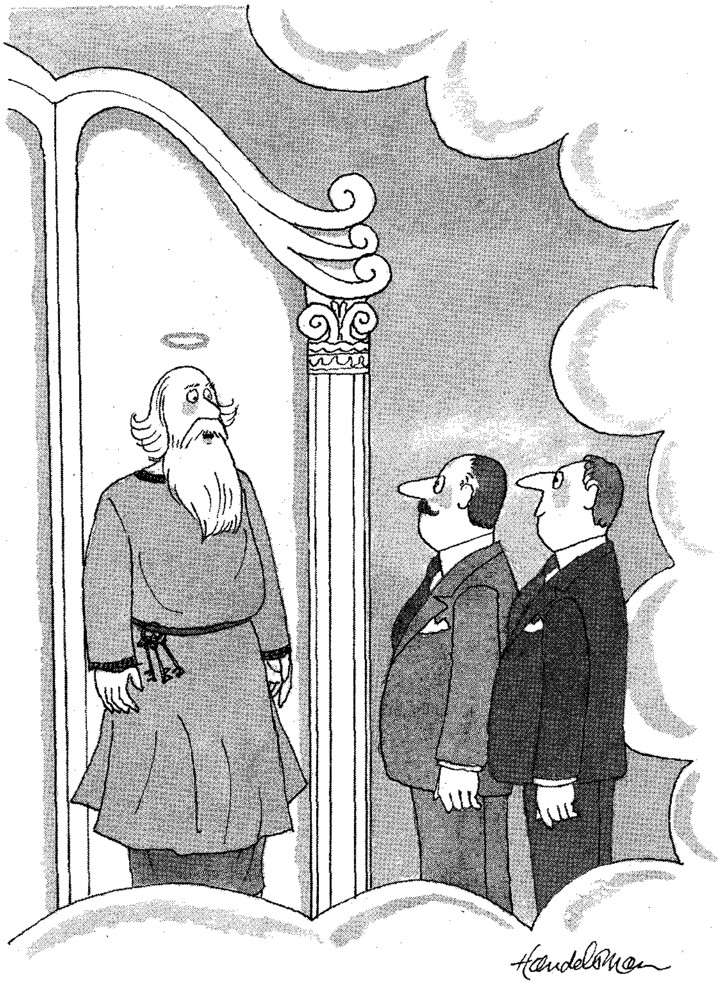
Hope was discovered in 1924 by the comedian Fatty Arbuckle, who got Hope into "tab shows"—mini-musicals in which Hope and his third dance partner, George Byrne, toured small-town America, first in "Hurley's Jolly Follies" and then in "Smiling Eyes" (both in 1925). "As far as stage presence and confidence, it did more for me than anything else," Hope said later. Afterward, billing themselves first as Dancing Demons and then as Dancemedians, Hope and Byrne worked their way up the food chain of variety entertainment, which included dancing with the Hilton Sisters, Siamese twins of some notoriety ("They're too much of a woman for me," Hope joked), and, in 1927, talking their way into a Broadway musical, "Sidewalks of New York." (This break turned into a bust when beefed-up production numbers by the show's stars made the pair's hoofing extraneous.) Before Broadway, Hope and Byrne had worked jokes in between dance; now they decided to work dance in between jokes:

HOPE: Where do the bugs go in the wintertime?
BYRNE: I don't know, you can search me.

The act bombed, and a William Morris agent told Hope bluntly, "You ought to go West, change your act, and get a new start." Working their way back to the Midwest, the disheartened team accepted an engagement on a bill in New Castle, Pennsylvania, where the manager asked Hope as a favor to come out after the last act and announce the next week's entertainment. One of the upcoming acts was a rube comic, whose stock-in-trade was tightfisted-farmer jokes. "Ladies and gentlemen," Hope declared, "next week Marshall Walker will be here with his Big Time Revue. Marshall is a Scotsman. I know him. He got married in the back yard so the chickens could get the rice." The audience roared; Hope's standup career had begun.

Within a few months, armed with a small derby, a big red bow tie, white cotton gloves, and a cigar, he was working solo in blackface for a lowly "rotary unit," which played a different theatre in Cleveland each night. "I scored well even if I was scoring in a minor league," Hope said. Four nights into the gig, he missed his trolley, and rushed to the theatre and onto the stage without makeup. "Don't ever put that cork on again. Your face is funny the way it is," the manager told him. This unwelcome news was Hope's first major comic discovery. "I'd thought my profile handsome in a dark, smoldering way, and discovering somebody thought it amusing was a shock," he said. Hope's lantern jaw and ski-jump nose—his slightly skewed good looks—made audiences more accepting of his brazenness. He soon got work in Chicago as an m.c. at the Stratford Theatre, where he stretched a two-week engagement into six months. "I worked fast, snappy, and impish," he said. Hope's jokes were not really trenchant, but his speed made up for it. By then he was earning three hundred dollars a week and was scrambling to find new material.

Although Hope's subsequent contracts with his writers would include paying them to come up with comic "poses," his easygoing manner was one pose he evolved on his own, in vaudeville—his "sneak attack," he called it. "I make a line seem like nothing. It's the opposite of hitting a joke too hard," he observed. In a way, Hope's self-expression was not in what he said but in how he said it. In "Roberta," for instance, he argued and finally won a battle with the librettist to change the segue into one of the show's best songs, "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." Otto Harbach's book introduced the song with the line "There's an old Russian proverb—'When your heart's on fire, smoke gets in your eyes.'" Hope's contribution topped it with a laugh that caught the cultural mood of romantic disenchantment. "We have a proverb over here in America, too," he said. "'Love is like hash. You have to have confidence in it to enjoy it.'" The wisecrack and others like it defined him as that comic cousin of the American booster: the card, a glad-handing showoff eager to disguise his depths. Hope's breeziness, which in later years he emphasized by walking onstage with a golf club, disguised the immodesty of his ego and the agility of his mind. When Hope was making his début as a solo performer in the revue "Ballyhoo of 1932," the curtain was late one night because the chorus girls weren't ready. In the midst of pandemonium, the producer Lee Shubert sent Hope out to calm the audience. "Ladies and gentlemen, this is the first time I've ever been on before the acrobats," Hope began. He waved to someone in the balcony and said, "Hello, Sam." He then explained, "That's one of our backers up there. He says he's not nervous, but I notice that he's buckled his safety belt." Hope stayed on for six minutes; by the time he was through, the producers had decided to let



*"You're saying that because of the merger I have to admit both of you?"*

• •

him warm up the audience every night.

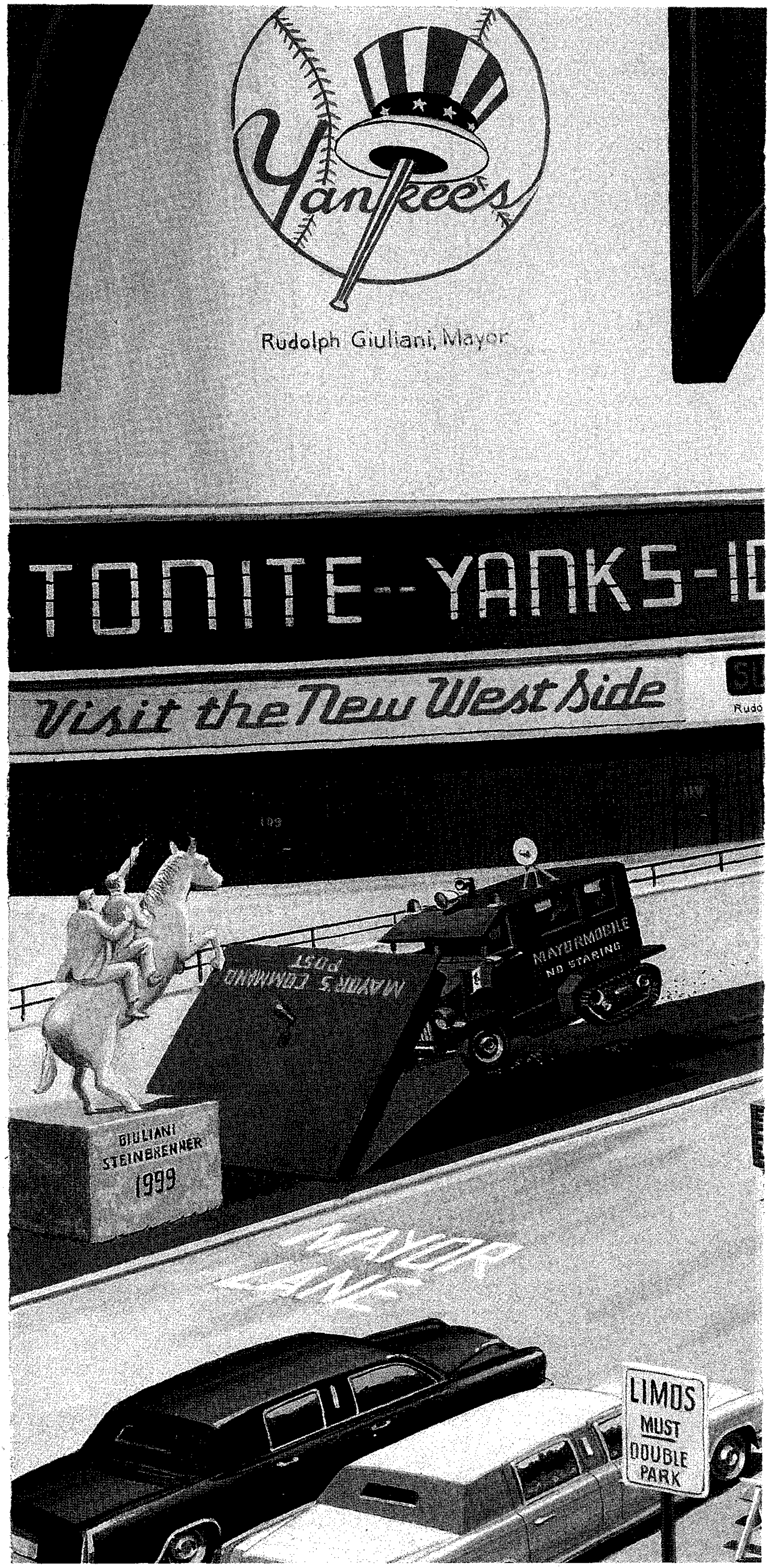
On Broadway, Hope had some showstopping moments with classic songs—including Cole Porter's "It's De-Lovely," with Ethel Merman, in "Red, Hot and Blue!" (1936), and "I Can't Get Started," with Eve Arden, in "Ziegfeld Follies of 1936"—but not with classic comic material. "Bob Hope has a slick, humorous style of delivery which ought to put him in the front rank of talking bandmasters as soon as he gets something to say which does not bring the blush of shame to his cheeks," Robert Benchley wrote in these pages about "Roberta." Hope's onstage ad-libbing generated more humor and attention than the show's lacklustre libretto. While singing a verse of "It's De-Lovely" in "Red, Hot and Blue!" Ethel Merman was not amused to discover Hope lounging at her feet; she told the producer, "If that so-called comedian ever behaves like that again I'll use my shoe to remodel his ski nose." Later, Merman said, "I'd rather bed with a porcupine than share the stage with that bastard."

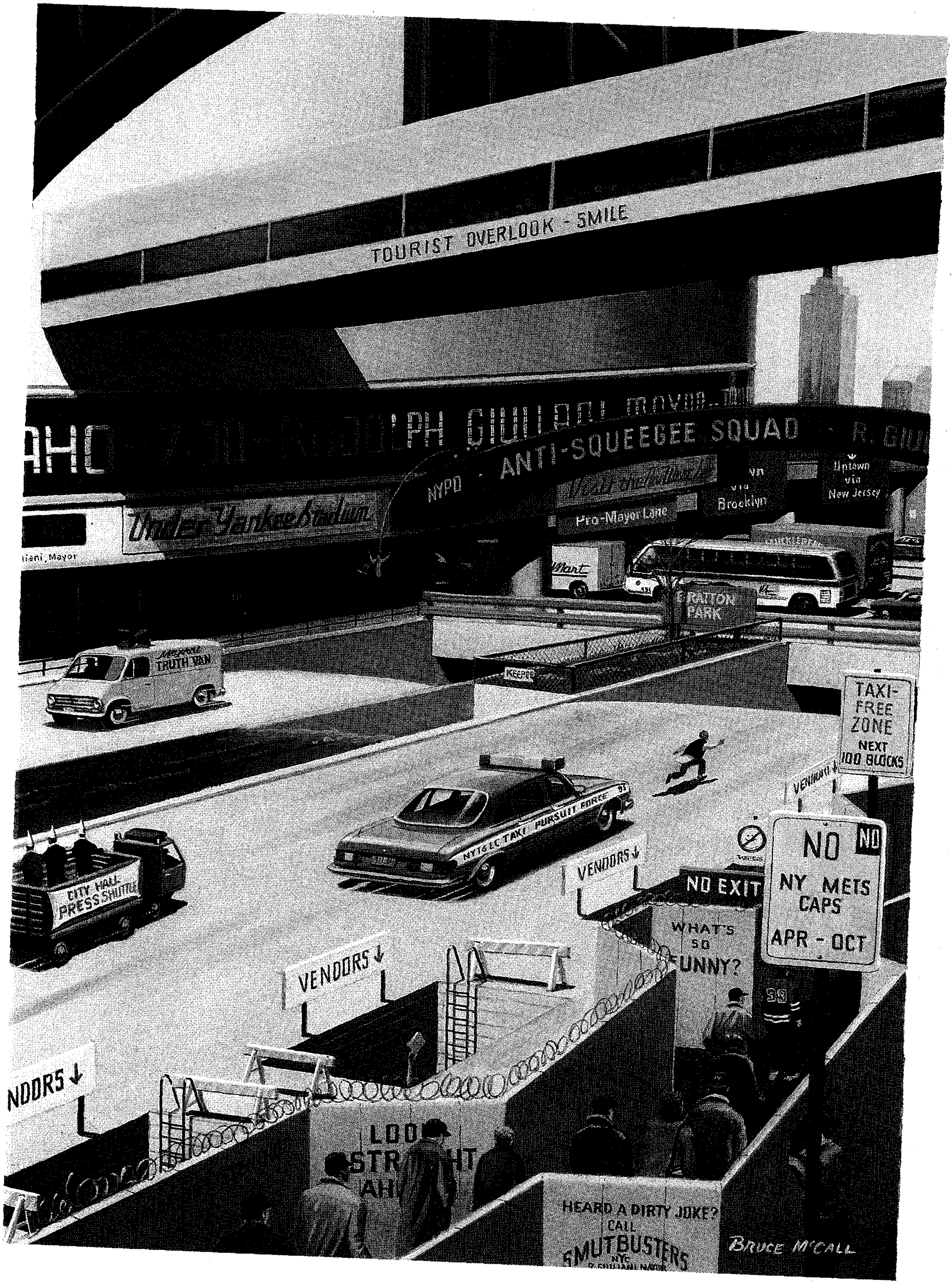
By the mid-thirties, Hope had acquired a Pontiac with his name on it, a beautiful, devoted wife, and a high-powered agent, Louis Schurr. He had all the accoutrements of success except good material. One Broadway critic wrote, "Bob Hope has something; but you don't notice it if you're sitting five rows back"; even on radio, where he made frequent guest appearances, he was said by *Variety* in 1935 to be "easy to take, but hard to remember." But Hope made up in perspiration what he lacked in inspiration. "I used to do four shows a day in vaudeville, then drop into a night club," he said. "I might do thirty or forty minutes off the cuff. I thought nothing of working from twelve noon to one o'clock the next morning." He did benefits, he networked, he developed material. Hope was never anybody's first choice for the shows that became his tri-

# GIULIANILAND

*by Bruce McCall*

*"Instead of being dragged down by the pessimism of the cynics, we have continually found new ways to improve the city for all New Yorkers. That's what the idea of quality of life is all about." —Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani*

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RUDOLPH GIULIANI mayor
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Under Yankee Stadium
NYPD · ANTI-SQUEEGEE SQUAD · R. GIU
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via Brooklyn
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Mayor's TRUTH VAN
RATTON PARK
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TAXI-FREE ZONE NEXT 100 BLOCKS
VENDORS ↓
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CITY HALL PRESS SHUTTLE
NO EXIT
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
NO NY METS CAPS APR - OCT
NO
VENDORS ↓
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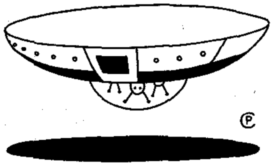
LOOK STRAIGHT AHEAD
HEARD A DIRTY JOKE? CALL SMUTBUSTERS NYC R. GIULIANI, MAYOR
BRUCE McCALL

umphs. He was offered “Roberta” after William Gaxton turned it down; “The Big Broadcast of 1938,” which gave Hope both his theme song, “Thanks for the Memory,” and started his movie career, had been meant for Jack Benny; and “Road to Singapore,” which was the first in a fabulous string of “Road” movies, had been offered to Burns and Allen and then to Fred MacMurray and Jack Oakie before the producers hit upon Hope and Crosby.



Hope did have one piece of luck: he came into his prime just as the talking pictures and radio were demanding the posture of ease—the illusion of authenticity which was Hope’s biggest performing asset. Daniel Boorstin writes in “The Americans,” about the emergence of mass media, “Naturalness itself was becoming a rare commodity which individual citizens were willing to pay for, while being (or at least seeming) natural became a special political talent.” By 1941, when fewer than ten per cent of Americans were paying taxes on more than ten thousand dollars, Hope was earning about half a million dollars; both advertisers and statesmen were selling the system, and Hope’s jokes, which were sharp but not barbed, created a sense of happy cohesion. (Not surprisingly, Hope was once asked to run as a Republican candidate for President.) “You have a nice show here,” he told an audience in 1932, at a time when Hoover was using the motto “Prosperity’s just around the corner,” setting up the biggest topical laugh he ever got in vaudeville: “I was just standing out in front watching the other acts when a lady walked up to me in the lobby and said, ‘Pardon me, young man, could you tell me where I could find the rest room?’ and I said, ‘It’s just around the corner.’ ‘Don’t give me that Hoover talk,’ she said. ‘I gotta go.’ ” Hope’s gibes rarely drew blood. “I can’t afford to go out and start knocking Democrats and knocking Republicans, because I’m usually selling a product everybody buys and I don’t want to alienate any part of my audience,” he said. In the end, he found that audience not on Broadway, where he was just a local star, but on radio, where, after 1938, he was a national figure. Radio also provided Hope with the one crucial ingredient missing from his rapid-fire stage patter: a comic character.

“We should take care to prevent your being a smart alec,” Hope’s agent Jimmy Saphier wrote in a prescient 1938 letter about Hope’s upcoming Pepsodent radio show. “Let’s try to build a lot of sympathy for your character, and have the rest of the cast bounce their jokes off you . . . as only sympathetic comedians have a chance for long life on the air.” Unless Hope was carefully watched, his trademark brashness could seem like contempt. The character we know as Bob Hope grew over two years “like a weed,” according to one of his writers. “We never told Bob this,” Mel Shavelson says. “We took his own characteristics and exaggerated them. The woman chaser. The coward. The cheap guy. We just put them in. He thought he was playing a character. He was playing, really, the real Bob Hope.” On the day Shavelson arrived in Hollywood from New York, he found himself an apartment and went to meet his new boss. “He asked me if I was married,” Shavelson writes in an unpublished memoir, “How to Succeed in Hollywood Without Really Trying.” “I said, ‘Not yet,’ and that seemed to please him. There was no one to share my apartment with me that lonely evening? . . . Then he said, ‘You won’t mind if I borrow the key? I’ll leave it in the mailbox when I leave around midnight.’ ” Shavelson continues, “I never found out who she was. I had certainly found out who Bob was, though.”

“He was a satyr,” Hal Kanter says about Hope’s not-so-well-kept secret. Hope’s vanity was also transparent. “He never walked past the mirror without looking at himself or smoothing his hair,” Frank Liberman, his publicist of forty-one years, says. Hope’s parsimony, however, was more confounding. Although at the beginning he spent a third of his salary on writers, Hope was still capable of telling Larry Gelbart, “Ten o’clock. My house. Tomorrow morning. Bring your own orange juice.” Hope liked to hustle his writers in pool, and also made bets on jokes that he didn’t like but the writers did. “We never won, because he would kill the laugh in order to win the bet,” Shavelson says. Even payday became a joke about Hope’s ambivalence. In a North Hollywood house he once rented, there was a circular staircase. “Every week we’d gather at the bottom of the stairs,” Shavelson recalls. “He would go up to his office, write out our checks, and make paper airplanes out of them. Then he’d yell out our names and throw them down. You had to jump up and catch it. He said he had to do it because it was the only exercise we got.”

At the same time, Hope was a terrific audience for jokes and a fine editor of his writers’ material. In the early days, according to Shavelson, “we’d meet at Hope’s office at 9 P.M. Hope would never show until about ten, eleven o’clock. What we didn’t realize for a long time was that it was Bob’s excuse for getting out of the house. So when he’d finished with the girl, he’d show up at the meeting and we would have all the jokes ready for him.” Shavelson adds, “Around one, when we’d all be starving, he’d send Sherwood Schwartz out for a quart of vanilla ice cream with pineapple syrup. Bob would go on with the meeting, eat the whole quart, never offer us anything.” Each writer wrote an entire script every week and read it aloud for the others; by the process of elimination, the strongest jokes survived. To winnow them down, Hope marked them with a special code: 1 (titter), 2-3 (fair), check (“boff,” as he called a big laugh), check with a line through it (super-boff), check with two lines through it (super-super-boff). He was always pushing for the big laughs. “We need a big kid at the back,” he would prod his writers, meaning a strong comic finish. An hour-and-a-half script was compiled and previewed in front of a live Sunday audience; it was then cut down to a half-hour performing script for the Tuesday-night radio show.

The opening monologue—or “mono,” as Hope always called it—was where his heart was. “He guarded the monologue like the Dead Sea Scrolls,” Liberman says. No monologue was ever allowed to be mimeographed, carbon-copied, or included in any final script except Hope’s own. In fact, in order to prevent the East Coast 10 P.M. audience from retelling Hope’s “nifties” to West Coast friends in the three-hour time lag between performances, Hope often instructed his writers to do a second monologue for his California audience. Unlike his competitors, who were gentle (Jack Benny) or folksy (Fibber McGee and Molly) or droll (Fred Allen), Hope performed the monologues in a steamrolling, staccato style that owed its inspiration to the gossip columnist and radio powerhouse Walter Winchell, whom Hope always wanted to play in the movies. "Winchell went so fast you couldn't tell when he was lying," Shavelson says. Hope, who crammed as many as twenty-three jokes into a seven-minute riff, used wit instead of tidbits to achieve a similar kind of authority. He called débutantes "barebacks with greenbacks"; sailors were "wolves in ship's clothing"; a lorgnette was "a sneer on a stick." Among the news items that were the staples of the radio scripts was regular news about his career:

> JANE RUSSELL: Bob, is it true . . . I hear "Paleface" got wonderful reviews.
>
> BOB: I'll say. The critics raved about it. Walter Winchell gave it four orchids. Jimmy Fiddler gave it four bells. Whittaker Chambers gave it four pumpkins. (That's the last time I buy a joke from Alger Hiss.)

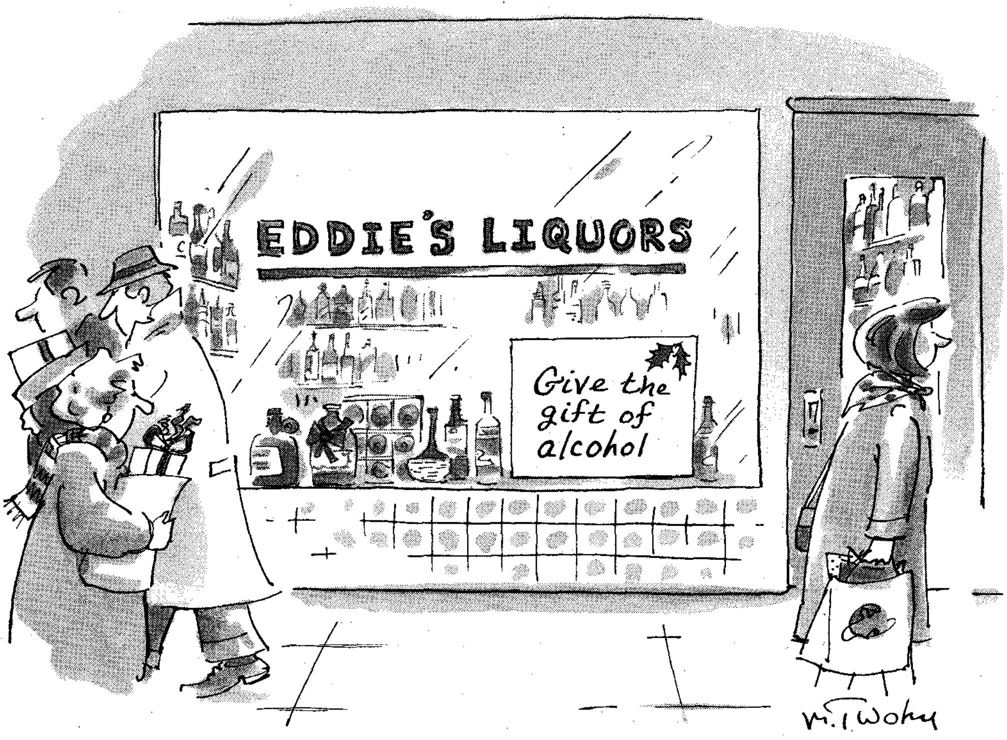
And Hope, who never worked dirty, had no qualms about working racy:

> DOROTHY LAMOUR: Don't take me seriously, Bob. I was pulling your leg.
>
> HOPE: Listen, Dottie—You can pull my right leg and you can pull my left leg. But don't mess with Mr. In-Between.

"No one else came on and did that much material in that short a time," Larry Gelbart says. "It really was electric." He adds, "It was electronic vaudeville." The monologue was followed by skits and songs performed by regulars such as Jerry Colonna and by frequent visitors, like Doris Day and Frances Langford; the show culminated in a sketch with the whole company. "But what it mostly was," Gelbart says, "was jokes, jokes, jokes."

BY 1939, Hope was fourth among the radio comedians; by 1940, he was second; and when, by chance, on May 6, 1941, Hope grudgingly agreed to leave the studio and perform for soldiers at March Field, in California, he discovered the joys of a captive, entertainment-starved military audience: a constituency that vaulted him into first place and kept him there more or less for a lifetime. According to Milt Josefsberg, who wrote Jack Benny's signature gag ("Your money or your life"), the laughs in Hope's first broadcast to an all-female audience of Wacs "were so loud and long that the writers cut out seven minutes of script while the broadcast was in progress so the show would not run longer than the half-hour time period." From May of 1941 until June of 1948, Hope performed almost all of his four hundred radio programs at Navy, Army, or Air Force bases. Throughout the war and after it, Hope's work for the armed services far exceeded that of any other American entertainer, and it gave his comedy something that it would otherwise never have had: a mission. He'd found an audience that desperately needed laughter, and, Shavelson says, "he tailored his material to them." His entertaining of American troops was heroic and exhausting, and was also a brilliant and enduring advertisement for himself. He became the G.I.s' friend: Uncle Bob (the stand-in for Uncle Sam) was the man who would go to any lengths to bring jokes, girls, and the whiff of paternalistic American swagger to the homesick troops. "He has caught the soldier's imagination," John Steinbeck wrote in the New York *Herald Tribune*, in 1943. "It is interesting to see how he has become a symbol." Hope's troop shows created a reservoir of cultural good will which was invoked subliminally every time in the next half century when, before his entrance, the orchestra struck up "Thanks for the Memory." "I saw your sons and your husbands, your brothers and your sweethearts," he wrote in the preface to "I Never Left Home," an account of his Second World War barnstorming, whose dedication reads "B.H. to G.I." "I saw how they worked, played, fought, and lived. I saw some of them die." He added, "Dying is sometimes easier than living through it." On the page, the sentiment seems dreadful; on the stage, detachment played better. In Tunisia, one disaffected member of the audience shouted, "Draft dodger! Why aren't you in uniform?" Hope shot back, "Don't you know there's a war on? A guy could get hurt!"

HOPE'S nonchalance broadcast to combat-weary soldiers the comforting notion that life wasn't always to be taken seriously. This message was brought home most sensationally in the high jinks of his motion pictures, especially the "Road" movies that he made starting in the forties, in which cowardice was lovable and danger was without consequences. "Hokum" was Bing Crosby's word for the loosey-goosey banter between him and Hope, which began when they shared a vaudeville bill at New York's Capitol Theatre, in 1932. Crosby was romantic and cavalier; Hope was impudent and driven. "They were a great team," says Norman Panama, who, with his partner, Melvin Frank, wrote many memorable Hollywood comedies, including Hope and Crosby's "Road to Utopia." "There


EDDIE'S LIQUORS
Give the gift of alcohol

was always something in front of Bob, whether it was a five-hundred-dollar suit or a three-hundred-dollar set of golf clubs. He used Crosby for protection, someone to share the responsibility for the laughs." Walter Winchell's ongoing mock war with the banana-nosed bandleader Ben Bernie had popularized the fashion of celebrity feuds; Jack Benny and Fred Allen, W. C. Fields and Charlie McCarthy, and Hope and Crosby—as Ski Snoot and Mattress Hip—soon followed suit. "There's nothing of the sacred clown in them, the Don Quixote, Sancho Panza thing—they're both Sancho Panza," the film critic Andrew Sarris says. "What they do is not sentimental. There are no tears, and there's no great joy, either. It's just efficient laughter."

The seven "Road" pictures built their parody of competitiveness into a lucrative running gag that played for more than twenty years, and continued until Crosby died of a heart attack on a Spanish golf course in 1977. Hope was so undone by Crosby's death that, for the first time in his life, he cancelled a performance. "I met him at the airport," Elliott Kozak, then Hope's manager, recalls. "I drove him home. He was a basket case. I'd never seen him cry." Kozak adds, "It wasn't because he was close. I believe that Bob felt, Well, if it happened to Bing, it could happen to me." But Hope and Crosby, who shared golf games and oil wells as well as films, rarely approached in private the rapport that their on-camera badinage suggested. "I don't think Bob ever called Bing just to say, 'Hey, how are you? How you feeling?' " Kozak says. Hope frowned on Bing's drinking; Bing looked askance at Hope's philandering. "Bing was a man with an education," says Hal Kanter, who wrote for both stars, separately and together. "He had a good vocabulary and spoke with good grammar. . . . He used to poke fun at Bob's lack of it. Bob, I think, resented it. He almost assiduously went around trying to improve himself." Kanter adds, "Whatever Bing had Bob wanted."

Among the other things that Hope envied were Bing's Academy Award for acting and his reputation as a romantic leading man. This offscreen ambivalence added emotional vigor to their amiable onscreen jousting, which, as Pauline Kael once wrote, "took the thud out of the dumb gags and topical jokes." Crosby recalled about their first movie, "Road to Singapore" (1940), "For a couple of days, when Hope and I tore freewheeling into a scene, ad-libbing and violating all the accepted rules of moviemaking, the director Victor Schertzinger stole bewildered looks at his script, then leafed rapidly through it, searching for the lines we were saying. 'Perhaps we'd better do it the way it's written, gentlemen,' he'd say reprovingly, but then he'd notice that the crew was laughing at our antics." At one point, Hope spotted one of the film's screenwriters, Don Hartman, and shouted, "If you recognize anything of yours, yell bingo!" But Norman Panama, who directed "Road to Hong Kong," says that Hope and Crosby's ad-libbing was a myth. "Bing never wanted anything changed. That's something everybody forgets. There were some ad-libs, but not nearly as much as the legend would have it."

## THIS PLEASING ANXIOUS BEING

### I

In no time you are back where safety was,
Spying upon the lambent table where
Good family faces drink the candlelight
As in a manger scene by de La Tour.
Father has finished carving at the sideboard
And Mother's hand has touched a little bell,
So that, beside her chair, Roberta looms
With serving bowls of yams and succotash.
When will they speak, or stir? They wait for you
To recollect that, while it lived, the past
Was a rushed present, fretful and unsure.
The muffled clash of silverware begins,
With ghosts of gesture, with a laugh retrieved,
And the warm, edgy voices you would hear:
Rest for a moment in that resonance.
But see your small feet kicking under the table,
Fiercely impatient to be off and play.

### II

The shadow of whoever took the picture
Reaches like Azrael's across the sand
Toward grownups blithe in black-and-white, encamped
Where surf behind them floods a rocky cove.
They turn with wincing smiles, shielding their eyes
Against the sunlight and the future's glare,
Which notes their bathing caps, their quaint maillots,
The wicker picnic hamper then in style,
And will convict them of mortality.
Two boys, however, do not plead with time,

On the set, and in public together, Hope and Crosby were always "the boys": their movies were really a sophisticated game of hide-and-seek with the occasional game of patty-cake thrown in each time the twosome combined to punch out the enemy. The "Road" movies also set the standard for the sexual fiasco that was Hope's lifetime cinematic stock-in-trade; in some instances, Hope's animal urges gave way simply to animals. In "Road to Bali" he's almost raped by a gorilla; in "Son of Paleface" he beds a horse. The fact that Hope almost never seemed to get the girl didn't spoil the happy ending for the audience; Hope always had himself.

Hope's character—the coward's coward—was balm to frayed wartime nerves, and a nice break from the usual strong, silent types. And yet release from the solemnity of self can't completely explain the depth to which Hope, both plus and minus Crosby, was absorbed by the culture. (Between 1941 and 1951, Hope was among Hol-

Distracted as they are by what?—perhaps
A whacking flash of gull wings overhead—
While off to one side, with his back to us,
A painter, perched before his easel, seeing
The marbled surges come to various ruin,
Seeks out of all those waves to build a wave
That shall in blue summation break forever.

### III

Wild, lashing snow, which thumps against the
  windshield
Like earth tossed down upon a coffin lid,
Half clogs the wipers, and our Buick yaws
On the black roads of 1928.
Father is driving; Mother, leaning out,
Tracks with her flashlight beam the pavement's edge,
And we must weather hours more of storm
To be in Baltimore for Christmastime.
Of the two children in the back seat, safe
beneath a lap robe, soothed by jingling chains
And by their parents' pluck and gaiety,
One is asleep. The other's half-closed eyes
Make out at times the dark hood of the car
Plowing the eddied flakes, and might foresee
The steady chugging of a landing craft
Through morning mist to the bombarded shore,
Or a deft prow that dances through the rocks
In the white water of the Allagash,
Or, in good time, the bedstead at whose foot
The world will swim and flicker and be gone.

—RICHARD WILBUR

lywood's ten biggest money-making stars, and in 1945, when Paramount announced there would be no more "Road" movies, it received seventy-five thousand letters protesting the decision, which it quickly rescinded.) In his many incarnations of braggadocio and cunning, Hope's character was a direct descendant of Sam Slick ("We are born in a hurry, educated at full speed, our spirit is at high pressure, and our life resembles a shooting star"). A kind of Yankee peddler, Hope sold himself in one implausible imposture after another: photographer as gumshoe ("My Favorite Brunette"), huckster dentist as Indian fighter ("The Paleface"), tailor as Casanova ("Casanova's Night Out").

In life, Hope could be every bit as sly as his persona. In the first flush of his film popularity, in 1940, he pressed Samuel Goldwyn to raise his salary from fifty to a hundred thousand dollars a picture. Goldwyn refused, but this didn't stop him from asking Hope, as a favor, to m.c. a gala première of "The Westerner," in Fort Worth. At the event, after a bevy of stars, including Gary Cooper, had been brought onstage, Hope called Goldwyn out and gave him a flattering introduction. Goldwyn returned the compliment. "I haven't made a comedy since Eddie Cantor left me," he said. "I never found a comedian who I thought could do as well—until now. I finally found one in Bob Hope." After the applause died down, Hope said, "That's very nice, Sam. Now let's talk money." Goldwyn was nonplussed. "Later," he whispered. "We'll talk later." "No, let's talk about it here," Hope said loudly. "These people won't mind. Let's get really comfortable. Why don't we just lie down and talk things over." With his audience howling with laughter in front of him, Goldwyn had no choice but to get down on the floor with Hope. "Now, Sam, about my salary," Hope persisted. Goldwyn reached for the mike, but Hope refused to hand it over, and finally Goldwyn whispered something in Hope's ear. Hope whispered something back, and they both got to their feet. "It's going to be a great pleasure to make a picture with Mr. Goldwyn," Hope told the audience. He had his deal.

Although Hope won five "special" Academy Awards in his career, not one of them was for a specific acting role. "Welcome to the Academy Awards," he began the Oscar ceremony in 1968. "Or—as it's known at my house—Passover." When, in later years, Tony and Linda Hope suggested that they option John Osborne's "The Entertainer" as an Oscar-contending vehicle for their father, Hope demurred. "He always said he wanted an Academy Award for acting, but he also never wanted to get outside his persona," Tony Hope says. "He knew where his audience was, and he didn't want to risk it." Hope was wedded to the joke. And his habit of letting his joke writers gang-tackle scripts and turn them into a theatrical hodgepodge didn't help his artistic cause. In fact, Hope was at his tastiest when he danced. In a spoof of Al Jolson's Southern smarminess, "Apalachicola, Florida" ("Road to Rio"), or in his tap contest with Jimmy Cagney ("The Seven Little Foys"), something quirky, passionate, and personal came through which a lot of his critics felt was missing from his well-worked-out shtick.

But Hope's movie legacy lives on in the films of Woody Allen, who claims Hope as a seminal influence on his screen persona. "When my mother took me to see 'Road to Morocco,' I knew exactly what I wanted to do with my life," Allen says in the voice-over of his film homage to Hope, "My Favorite Comedian" (1979). Allen, a great writer of comic lines, admires Hope, a great reader of comic lines. "It's a delivery that's comparable to Groucho," Allen explained to me. "It's more realistic than Groucho, and so his range is much wider. Someone like Groucho, though he entertained, had a sense of deep surrealism or deep suffering. Hope's persona is glib. He's not concerned with suffering, but what he is concerned with is very, very amusing." The best comedy is about transgression; Hope's comedy was about conformity. He was a sheep in wolf's clothing—an image that Allen overhauled, adding angst and intellect to Hope's anachronistic glibness. But

Allen's admiration of Hope's comedy is strictly in his films. "In other media, particularly television, he was not very good," Allen says of Hope's two hundred and eighty-four prime-time television shows, which began in 1950 and ended in 1997, and generally attracted a forty-per-cent share of the audience. "He was lazy, and nobody cared. He would come out and do these old-fashioned sketches, and after a while he was unashamedly reading from cards. It was just awful."

"When vaudeville died, television was the box they put it in," Hope joked a year before he went into TV. He turned television into his own personal vaudeville circuit. "Hope never developed a character in television, never," Larry Gelbart says. But, as America split over the Vietnam War, it was Hope himself, not his comic character, who played most dramatically in the nation. Until Vietnam, Hope had been a Cold War wit, whose jokes confirmed America's superiority. Russia? "Anybody without a stiff neck is a traitor." Africa? "Texas with Arabs." Korea? "Seoul has changed hands so many times the towels in the hotel are marked 'His,' 'Hers,' and 'Who's Sorry Now?' " Prodded by his liberal joke writers, Hope, to his credit, was one of the first comedians to take comic swipes at Senator Joseph McCarthy. "I have it on good authority that McCarthy is going to disclose the names of two million Communists," he said in a 1954 TV monologue. "He's just got his hands on the Moscow telephone directory." Hope's topical humor flattered as it teased, and this was the secret of his success as a court jester to eleven Presidents. "He's been able to interject himself into the political arena without anybody getting mad at him," Gerald Ford told me. "He liked to sort of stick the needle in a little bit, but do it in a very nice way." (Hope said, "I love playing golf with Jerry Ford. If you beat him, he pardons you.")

In his compendium of Presidential zingers, "Dear Prez, I Wanna Tell Ya!" (1996), Hope wrote, "Laughter is nonpartisan." But laughter is never nonpartisan: even embracing the status quo is a political position. The Vietnam War made this paradox—and Hope's deep-seated conservatism—transparent. He abandoned his posture of neutrality and

SHOWCASE BY JOSEF ASTOR

# LARGER THAN LIFE

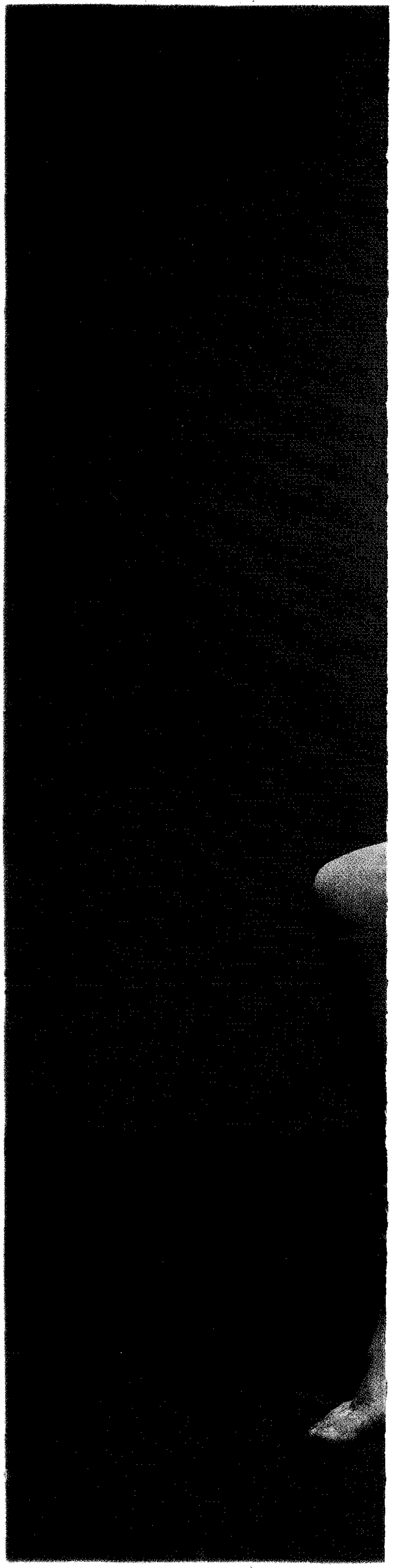
"Finally, Martha's in a body that lives up to her stature," the seventy-two-year-old choreographer Murray Louis says, referring to the barefoot figure at right. Martha Graham was scarcely five feet tall, and Richard Move, shown here in his version of Graham's "Lamentation," is six feet four. In various Graham outfits, Move hosts a hot-ticket dance showcase at Mother, a tiny night club in the meatpacking district, where his magnification of the modern-dance legend seems just right.

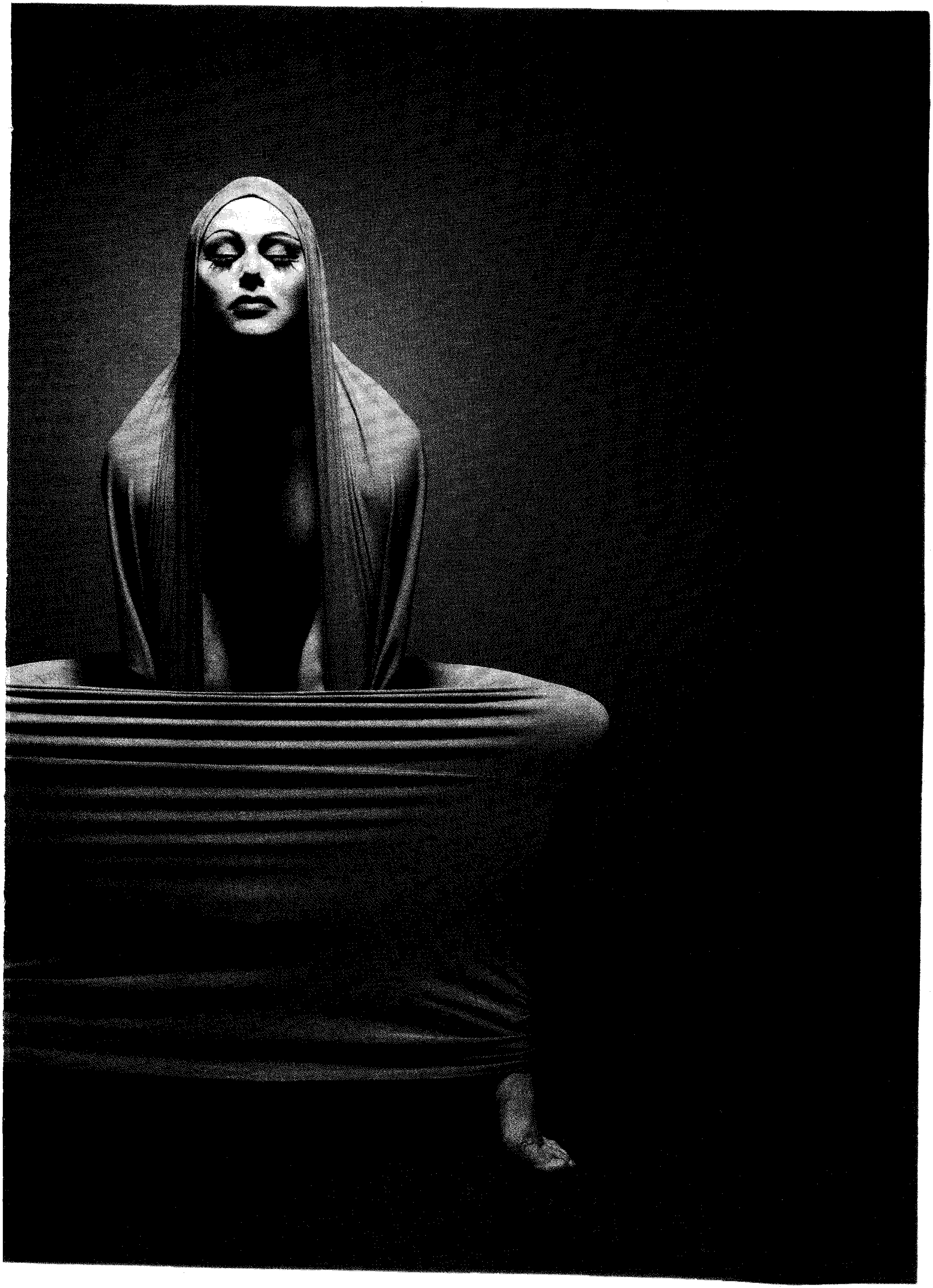
"If anything, I underplay her," Move insisted, picking up a knockoff of a foot-and-a-half-long golden hairpin that Graham wore in "Night Journey." "Look at this Flintstone couture. And this is not even an exaggeration. Martha is a costume designer's dream—all the capes and the funeral shrouds."

But what first drew him to Martha was her glamorous persona and "her mystical meandering," Move says. His dog-eared copy of Graham's autobiography, "Blood Memory," is ruffled with Post-its, and many of his asterisked sections have served as tailor-made introductions to the acts featured in "Martha@Mother," as the showcase is called. Its quick-moving format (six acts get ten minutes each) seems to bring out the best in the contemporary choreography—the January installment features the minimalist Molissa Fenley, the passionate José Navas, and Murray Louis. Martha's introductions, however, are equally memorable, and Move, in faux Halston, delivers them in a style best described as deadpan oracular.

Last April 1st, on the seventh anniversary of the diva's death, Move intoned Martha's rumination on retiring from the stage: "I think of Mallarmé's image of the swan, the beautiful, fragile swan that stayed too long in the winter water until the ice closed in around his feet and then he was caught. I wonder if I, too, sometimes have stayed too long." At that instant, the room shook with thunder, and outside the night club it began to pour.

—Kevin Conley





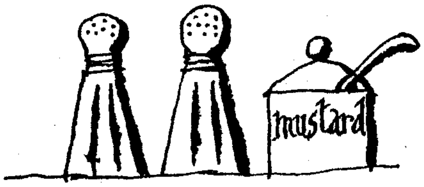
began to take sides with his friends, who were known in other quarters as "the military-industrial complex." He lent his joke writers to Spiro Agnew and his presence to Richard Nixon, and his own jokes increasingly turned from saucy to sour: "Students are revolting all over the world. I don't know what they're revolting about, I just know that they're revolting." He tried to define a middle ground for himself. "I'm a hawkish dove," he said. "It's nothing like a pigeon, but if I have to lay an egg for my country I'll do it."

In Hope's role as G.I. Bob, it was business as usual. He continued to perform his troop shows, and his 1970 and 1971 Christmas specials from the war zone ranked among the all-time top thirty popular American TV programs and linked him inextricably in the public imagination to the Vietnam quagmire. "Hey, aren't you the guy who sponsored the Vietnam War?" a Van Nuys teenager asked Hope in the early seventies as he was buying an ice-cream cone.

In putting his comedy in the service of the state, Hope, who was dubbed "a Pentagon clown" by *Izvestia*, had become a controversial force of divisiveness instead of unity. One night in 1973 at the NBC studios, Hope slipped into the audience to watch "The Dean Martin Show," on which the comedian Don Rickles was appearing. The audience spotted Hope and started to applaud. Rickles waited for the applause to die down, and then said, "Well, the war must be over." The howls of laughter acknowledged Hope's dilemma. During the Vietnam War, Hope had found himself embattled and in the unusual position of occasionally being shouted down or at a loss for words. In 1970, at the Miss World contest, in London, he was interrupted by explosions and by the whirring of rattles in the audience, and hurled objects forced him to leave the stage briefly. According to General William Westmoreland, Hope did "more for the morale of the Armed Forces than any American that has ever lived." But his hard work received more of a mixed reception in the field than his publicity machine would admit. At Long Binh in 1971, Hope's show was met with banners that read "Peace Not Hope" and "The Vietnam War Is a Bob Hope Joke," and he enraged the soldiers when he said, "You're off the front page back home. The Vietnam War is now tucked away between 'Li'l Abner' and 'Chuckle a Day.' " At the end of that show, when a general presented Hope with a gift—a "Ho Chi Minh bicycle"—G.I.s walked out. Hope was unnerved. He shouted back at the hecklers, "In my heart, you're the guys that are against war because you're the guys that are helping to end it! You've all listened to that garbage of the other cats. . . . What have they ever done for the world? They talk a lot about the My Lai massacre . . . but that's a load of nothing, because they forget the good that we've done helping little kids and building orphanages."

In 1972, on a U.S.O. tour, Hope was billeted in Bangkok, for security reasons, and flown daily to different military installations in Vietnam. He joked, "When I came out of a temple recently, I found two Thai families in my shoes who refused to evacuate." The United States Ambassador to Thailand issued an official apology to the Thai government. "I get very little flak in the States, but when I do it makes good copy," Hope said, adding insult to injury. "For instance, the gay-lib movement made a big protest to NBC when I said in a show that their demonstrations were the only ones on earth led by a cop riding sidesaddle." Hope, who put such an emphasis on timing, seemed to have lost the pulse of his times. In fact, with twenty-five years of performing still left to him, he had lost something even more important: the allegiance of a younger generation.

THESE days, Hope pads about his rooms on the second floor of his Toluca Lake house, surrounded by autographed pictures of the war correspondent Ernie Pyle, F.D.R., General MacArthur, and the English Royal Family. "He's whistling all the time," Tony Hope says. "He's singing old songs to himself. The ones that come up most are the ones that he used to sing with my mother. He'll just sing his part to her if she's there, or without her being there." At dinnertime, Hope joins Dolores downstairs in the playroom, a large, informal second living room. They sit in the television alcove at a round maple table where Dolores likes to play gin rummy with friends. A framed sampler on the sideboard reads "O.K. So This Isn't Home Sweet Home—Adjust."



For sixty-four years, Dolores has had to do a lot of adjusting. "He's a rover by nature," Dolores told an interviewer in 1953. "The first year we were married, I saw so little of Bob that I wasn't sure we'd make a go of it. Now, of course, I've gotten accustomed to his being away, and I couldn't imagine life being any different." Her Catholicism and her family helped Dolores fill Hope's long absences. "There were times I wanted to pack it in," Dolores told the gossip columnist Cindy Adams; and times, too, when Hope did. "Marilyn Maxwell was really serious," Elliott Kozak says of the buxom blonde, who was known on the Paramount lot as Mrs. Hope in the early fifties. "Bob told me at one point he almost left Dolores for her."

But Bob and Dolores were a good partnership; they shared not only a sense of humor but an almost Presidential faith in keeping up appearances. "There was a big social element to being successful as a standup comedian," Tony Hope says. "You had to have the right wife and the right kids. . . . You had to have the total image. And she created that for him." About her husband's notorious womanizing, Dolores told me, "It never bothered me, because I thought I was better-looking than anybody else."

Still, it was hard on her. "She longed for romance from this man, and he was cold as ice to her," says Kozak, who calls Hope "the most self-centered person" he has ever known. "We were in London one time," he recalls. "Bob, Dolores, and I were walking at night. All of a sudden, out of the clear blue sky, she pushed him up against the wall and said, 'Kiss me, Bob. Tell me you love me.' I was so embarrassed I didn't know what to say. I turned my back on it. . . . I never saw him go to her and give her a peck on the cheek. I was with him for twenty-five years." Hope was full of feeling for his public but undemonstrative in private. "MERRY CHRISTMAS. TRIP GREAT. FEEL FINE. LOVE BOB," he wired Dolores in 1965 from Vietnam.

Dolores and the children were extras in Hope's epic. Once, when Tony was around seven, he greeted his father as they sat down to breakfast at a Pebble Beach hotel by saying, "Good morning, Mr. Hope." The son had learned the lesson of the family well. "I wanted everybody to know who he was," Tony says. "Part of my obligation was to uphold the tradition—the image." It was hard for anyone in the family to get much of Bob Hope. "He cares more for the life of the audience than for the life around him," Linda Hope says. The children's memories are of Hope's going away: away to work, away on regular two-hour evening constitutionals, away to a war zone. "We spent a lot of time at Burbank Airport," Tony Hope says. "One time, as the plane was landing I was waving goodbye Daddy, not knowing whether he was coming or going."

Now Hope, who used to spend up to two hundred and fifty days each year on the road, is home to stay, and the household balance has undergone a subtle recalibration. In his heyday Hope told Tony, who was a high-school swimming champ, "I'm still the champion of this house." But, with nothing more to win, Hope's competitive drive is in abeyance. "He's so mellow, so benign," Linda Hope says. "I can hardly believe it." Their old friend Rosemary Clooney says, "He's very demonstrative with Dolores now." A few years ago, visiting Linda in Galway, Ireland, the Hopes were given Claddagh rings—bands with two hands and a heart in the middle—which are often used as wedding rings. "They have not had those rings off their hands," Linda says. "If the heart is facing out, it means that you're looking for the love of your life. If it's facing in, it means you've found the one. Dad keeps playing with it and ends up half the time turning it out, like he's looking for love. Mom keeps observing and saying, 'You've got your ring on backward, Bob.' "

As Hope has increasingly retired from public life, Dolores has come forward into it. In 1993, at the age of eighty-three, she resumed a singing career that had effectively stopped when Hope married her, in 1934. She has cut four albums, and last year sang with Clooney at New York's Rainbow and Stars. She offers an explanation for why she has waited so long to fulfill her own theatrical ambitions: "Bob has always said he never wanted me overexposed." But on her first album, "Now and Then" (1993), she sings a smoky-voiced "Come In from the Rain," which seems to comment directly on the man who now likes to come downstairs and listen to her rehearse. "Well, hello there / Good old friend of mine," the Carole Bayer Sager–Melissa Manchester tune begins, "You've been reaching for yourself / For such a long time." The song continues:

It's a long road
When you're all alone
And a man like you
Will always choose the long way home.
There's no right or wrong
I'm not here to blame
I just want to be the one
To keep you from the rain.

Hope is still evading what he calls "the big divot." When Dolores raises the issue of where they should be buried, he says, "Surprise me." These days, he's accompanied everywhere by his companion and aide, J. Paulin. They go for drives: he drops by the Lakeside Golf Club two minutes away from the house to play a few holes and have a brandy Alexander in the clubhouse. When he is down in Palm Springs, where he has a twenty-five-thousand-square-foot ultramodern house on the top of a mountain, he will head out in the evening for the airport, where it's well lighted and empty. "All the rental-car people know him," Tony Hope told me. "He'll start working the airline terminal."

About a year ago, at a dinner party at Toluca Lake, Hope, who usually sits next to Dolores on such occasions, was sitting next to Tony and Tony's wife, Paula. "My mother blew him a kiss across the table and said, 'I miss you next to me,' " Tony says. "He turned to Paula and said, 'Sometimes I miss me, too.' "

But there are moments when the old Bob Hope shines through. At his ninety-fourth-birthday party, in May of last year, Rosemary Clooney sidled up to him and serenaded him with the usually unsung fourth chorus of "It's De-Lovely":

He's appalling, he's appealing,
He's a pollywog, he's a paragon,
He's a Popeye, he's a panic, he's a pip,
He's de-lovely.

Hope raised his eyes and grinned. "Fifteen curtain calls," he said. ♦

*"Main floor, aisle six, ladies' scarves. Shopper down."*

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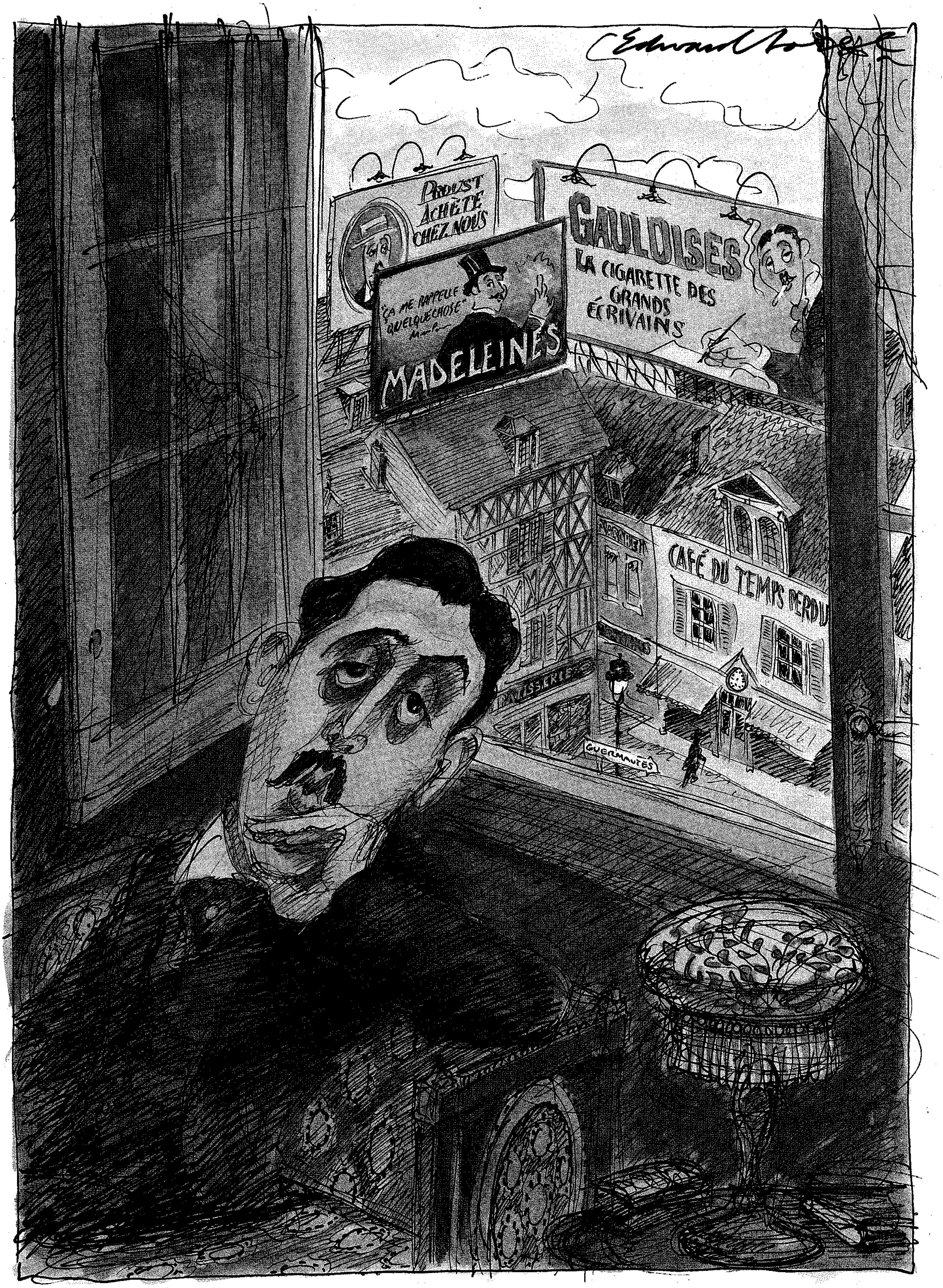

Edward Sorel
PROUST ACHÈTE CHEZ NOUS
"ÇA ME RAPPELLE QUELQUECHOSE" M— P—
MADELEINES
GAULOISES
LA CIGARETTE DES GRANDS ÉCRIVAINS
PATISSERIE
CAFÉ DU TEMPS PERDU
GUERMANTES

## LETTER FROM ILLIERS-COMBRAY

# IN SEARCH OF PROUST

*Why are more people than ever flocking to*
*a small town in provincial France?*

BY ANDRÉ ACIMAN

IT was by train that I had always imagined arriving in Illiers-Combray—not just any train but one of those drafty, pre-World War, rattling wagons which I like to think still leave Paris early every morning and, after hours of swaying through the countryside, squeak their way into a station that is as old and weather-beaten as all of yesteryear's provincial stops in France. The picture in my mind was always the same: the train would come to a wheezing halt and release a sudden loud chuff of steam; a door would slam open; someone would call out "Illiers-Combray"; and, finally, like the young Marcel Proust arriving for his Easter vacation just over a century ago, I would step down nervously into the small, turn-of-the-century town in Eure-et-Loir which he described so lovingly in "À la Recherche du Temps Perdu."

Instead, when I finally made my way to Illiers-Combray, late last year, I arrived by car with Anne Borrel, the curator of the Proust Museum there, who had offered to pick me up at my Paris hotel that morning. In my pocket was a cheap and tattered Livre de Poche edition of "Swann's Way," which I had brought in the hope that I'd find a moment to read some of my favorite passages on holy ground. That was to be my way of closing the loop, of coming home to a book I had first opened more than thirty years before.

I had bought it with my father, when I was fifteen, one summer evening in Paris. We were taking a long walk, and as we passed a small restaurant I told him that the overpowering smell of refried food reminded me of the tanneries along the coast road outside Alexandria, in Egypt, where we had once lived. He said he hadn't thought of it that way, but, yes, I was right, the restaurant did smell like a tannery. And as we began working our way back through strands of shared memories—the tanneries, the beaches, the ruined Roman temple west of Alexandria, our summer beach house—all this suddenly made him think of Proust. Had I read Proust? he asked. No, I hadn't. Well, perhaps I should. My father said this with a sense of urgency, so unlike him that he immediately tempered it, for fear I'd resist the suggestion simply because it was a parent's.

The next day, sitting in the sun on a metal chair in Lamartine Square, I read Proust for the first time. That evening, when my father asked how I had liked what I'd read, I feigned indifference, not really knowing whether I intended to spite a father who wanted me to love the author he loved most or to spite an author who had come uncomfortably close. For in the eighty-odd pages I had read that day I had rediscovered my entire childhood in Alexandria: the impassive cook, my bad-tempered aunts and skittish friends, the buzz of flies on sunny afternoons spent reading indoors when it was too hot outside, dinners in the garden with scant lights to keep mosquitoes away, the "ferruginous, interminable" peal of the garden bell announcing the occasional night guest who, like Charles Swann, came uninvited but whom everyone had nevertheless been expecting.

EVERY year, thousands of Prousto-tourists come to the former Illiers, which extended its name in honor of Proust's fictional town Combray, in 1971, on the centennial of his birth. The town knows it, proclaims it, milks it. Today, Illiers-Combray sells around two thousand madeleine pastries a month. The shell-shaped cakes are displayed in the windows of pastry shops like propitiatory offerings to an unseen god and are sold by the dozen—in case one wants to take some home to friends or relatives, the way pilgrims take back holy water from the Jordan or an olive twig from Gethsemane.

For the reader on a Proustian pilgrimage, tasting a madeleine is the supreme tribute to Proust. (As no pâtisserie fails to remind the tourists, it was on tasting a madeleine, now the most famous sponge cake in the history of world literature, that the adult narrator of Proust's novel was transported to his boyhood days in Combray.) It is also a gesture of communion through which readers hope, like Proust, to come home to something bigger, more solid, and ultimately, perhaps, truer than fiction itself. Anne Borrel often tells these Proust groupies that the cult of the madeleine is blasphemous, as are the claims made by one of the *pâtissiers* that members of the *famille* Proust used to purchase their madeleines on his premises. (In earlier drafts of the novel, Proust's madeleines may have been slices of melba toast, which evolved into toasted bread, only later to metamorphose into the sponge cakes.) But no one listens. Besides, going to Illiers-Combray and not tasting a madeleine would be like going to Jerusalem and not seeing the Wailing Wall or to Greenwich and not checking your watch. Luckily, I was able to resist temptation: during my visit, on a Sunday just a few days before Christmas, all the pastry shops were closed.

Before going to the Proust Museum, Anne Borrel and I had lunch at a tiny restaurant called Le Samovar. Plump and middle-aged, Borrel is the author of a cookbook and culinary history titled "Dining with Proust." She told me that some of the tourists come from so far away and have waited so long to make the trip that as soon as they step into Proust's house they burst into tears. I pictured refugees getting off a ship and kneeling to kiss the beachhead.

I asked about Proust's suddenly increasing popularity.

"Proust," Borrel replied, "is a must." (She repeated these four words, like a verdict, several times during the day.) She reminded me that there were cur-

EDWARD SOREL

rently six French editions of "À la Recherche du Temps Perdu" in print. I told her that a fourth English-language edition was due to appear in 2001. And that wasn't all: trade books on Proust and coffee-table iconographies were everywhere; in Paris, I had seen at least half a dozen new books that bore Proust's name or drew on Proustian characters occupying precious space on the display tables of bookstores and department stores. Even Proust's notes, manuscripts, and publishing history had been deemed complicated enough to warrant a book of their own, called "Remembrance of Publishers Past." Add to that T-shirts, watches, CDs, concerts, videos, scarves, posters, books on tape, newsletters, and a comic-strip version, entitled "Combray," whose first printing, of twelve thousand copies, sold out in three weeks. Not to mention the 1997-98 convention in Liège celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of Proust's death, with sessions on music and Proust, eating and Proust, a writing competition (on the subject of "Time Lost and Time Regained"), and a colloquium on asthma and allergies.

This kaleidoscope of Proustophernalia is matched by as many testimonials and tributes to Proust, in which he takes many forms. There is Proust the élitist and high-society snob; Proust the son of a Jewish mother; Proust the loner; Proust the dandy; Proust the analytical aesthete; Proust the soulful lovelorn boy; Proust the tart, the dissembling coquette; the Belle Époque Proust; the professional whiner; the prankster; the subversive classicist; the eternal procrastinator; and the asthmatic, hypochondriac Proust.

But the figure who lies at the heart of today's Proust revival is the intimate Proust, the Proust who perfected the studied unveiling of spontaneous feelings. Proust invented a language, a style, a rhythm, and a vision that gave memory and introspection an aesthetic scope and magnitude no author had conferred on either before. He allowed intimacy itself to become an art form. This is not to say that the vertiginous spate of memoirs that have appeared recently, with their de-rigueur regimens of child, spouse, and substance abuse, owe their existence, their voice, or their sensibility to Proust—clearly, they owe far more to Freud. But it does help to explain why Proust is more popular today, in the age of the memoir, than he has been at any other time in the century.

Like every great memoirist who has had a dizzying social life and a profoundly lonely one, Proust wrote because writing was his way of both reaching for an ever elusive world and securing his distance from it. He was among the first writers in this century to disapprove of the critics' tendency to seek correspondences between an artist's work and his private life. The slow, solitary metamorphosis of what truly happened into what, after many years, finally emerges in prose is the hallmark of Proust's labor of love.

Proust is at once the most canonical and the most uncanonical author, the most solemnly classical and the most subversive, the author in whom farce and lyricism, arrogance and humility, beauty and revulsion are indissolubly fused, and whose ultimate contradiction reflects an irreducible fact about all of us: we are driven by something as simple and as obvious as the desire to be happy, and, if that fails, by the belief that we once have been.

Victoria Roberts

*"Show me the way to the next karaoke bar."*

MY conversation with Anne Borrel was interrupted by the arrival of customers outside Le Samovar. "Take a look at those four," Borrel said, pointing to the two couples dawdling at the entrance. "I'll bet you anything they're *proustiens*." She referred to all tourists as *proustiens*—meaning not Proust scholars but individuals whom the French like to call *les amis de Proust*, Proustologues, Proustolaters, Proustocentrics, Proustomaniacs, Proustophiles, Proustophiliacs, Proustoholics . . . or *fidèles* (to use a term dear to Proust's malevolent arch-snob, Mme. Verdurin).

One of the four opened the door of the restaurant and asked in a thick Spanish accent whether lunch was still being served. *"Pintades"*—Guinea hens—"are all that's left," snapped the owner of Le Samovar. Borrel and I exchanged a complicitous glance, because talk of fowl immediately brought to mind a discussion we'd had in the car about Proust's servant, Françoise, who in "Swann's Way" butchers a chicken and then curses it for not dying fast enough.

The four tourists were shown to a table. One asked the proprietor what time the Proust Museum would open that afternoon, and he regretfully informed them that the museum was closed for the holidays. They were crestfallen. "What a pity! And we've come all the way from Argentina."

Anne Borrel had heard every word of the exchange. She reminded me of a teacher who with her back turned to the class while she's writing on the blackboard knows exactly who's whispering what to whom. She leaned over and told one of the Argentines, "You may have come to the right place."

Overjoyed, the Argentine blurted out, "You mean Marcel Proust used to eat here, in this restaurant?"

"No," Borrel answered, smiling indulgently. She told them that an improvised tour of the house could be arranged after coffee, and the Argentines went back to talking softly about Proust, staring every once in a while at our table with the thrilled and wary gaze of people who have been promised a miracle.

By the time our coffee was served, we had also acquired two English and three French *proustiens*, and a warm, festive mood permeated Le Samovar. It was like the gathering of pilgrims in Chaucer's Tabard Inn. Introductions were unnecessary. We knew why we were there, and we all had a tale to tell. By then, some of us would have liked nothing more than a fireplace, a large cognac, and a little prodding to induce us to recount how we had first come to read Proust, to love Proust, how Proust had changed our lives. I was, it dawned on me, among my own.

our Day
9:00 - circle time
10:00 - art fun
11:00 - snack
12:00 - S.A.T. prep
B. Smaller

AFTER dessert, Borrel put on her coat. "*On y va?*" she asked, rattling a giant key chain that bore a bunch of old keys with long shafts and large, hollowed oval heads. She led us down the Rue du Docteur Proust, named after Proust's father, who by the turn of the century had helped to halt the spread of cholera in Europe. The sidewalks and streets were empty. Everyone seemed to be away for the holidays. Franco-jazz Muzak emanated from loudspeakers, mounted on various lampposts, that were apparently intended to convey a festive yule spirit, but otherwise Illiers-Combray was deserted and gray—a dull, cloying, humdrum, wintry, ashen town, where the soul could easily choke. Small wonder that Marcel developed asthma, or that he had the heebie-jeebies on returning home after long evening walks with his parents, knowing that by the time dinner was served life would hold no surprises—only the inevitable walk up the creepy staircase and that frightful drama called bedtime.

Borrel stopped at one of many nondescript doors along the empty street. She stared at it for a moment, almost as though she were trying to remember whether this was indeed the right address, then took out her keys, inserted one into the lock, and suddenly gave it a vigorous turn, yanking the door open.

"*C'est ici que tout commence*," she said.

One by one, we filed into Proust's garden. Fortunately, no one cried. Borrel pointed to a little bell at the top of the gate. I couldn't contain myself. "Could this be the ferruginous bell?" I asked. It was a question she'd heard before. She took a breath. "You mean not the large and noisy rattle which deafened with its ferruginous, interminable, frozen sound any member of the household who set it off by coming in 'without ringing,' but the double peal, 'timid, oval, gilded,' of the visitor's bell, whereupon everyone would exclaim, 'A visitor! Who on earth could it be?' " (She was quoting from memory, and every time one of us asked a question after that she would recite the answer.)

Next she led us into the restored, relatively humble middle-class house—by no means the large villa I'd always imagined. The kitchen, where I'd envisaged Françoise cooking the chicken she had viciously butchered, was a sunless alcove. The dining room, with a small round table and dark wood panelling, was a depressing melee of browns. Then we came to Marcel's bedroom, with its tiny Empire-style bed, the magic lantern that kept him company at night when he dreaded sleep, and nearby the George Sand novel bound in red. In another room was the sofa that Proust had given to his maid, Céleste Albaret, and which her daughter had donated to the museum—and which was perhaps the inspiration for the fictional sofa that Marcel inherited from his Tante Léonie, made love on, and eventually passed along to the owner of a brothel.

When Borrel indicated another room, on the second floor, I interrupted her to suggest that it must surely be the room where, under lock and key, Marcel discovered the secret pleasures of onanism. Borrel neither confirmed nor denied my allegation. She said only, "The little room that smelt of orris-root . . . [where] I explored, across the bounds of

*“You’re great. But now it’s on to the next thing.”*

my own experience, an untrodden path which I thought was deadly.” In this way, I was summarily put in my place—for presuming to show off and for implying that I could make obvious what Proust’s oblique words had made explicit enough.

Back in the garden, I told her that the way she had opened the main door had reminded me of the moment in the novel when, after a long, moonlit family walk, Marcel’s father pretends to be lost. Everyone in our group suddenly remembered the episode, and, excited, one of the Englishmen described it to his friend, explaining that it was only after making everyone else panic in the dark that Marcel’s father had finally taken a key out of his pocket and quietly inserted it in what the others until then had failed to see was the back gate to their very own house. According to the Englishman, Marcel’s admiring mother, stunned by her husband’s ability to save the day, had exclaimed, “*Tu es fantastique!*”

“*Tu es extraordinaire!*” Borrel corrected him.

I had always liked that scene: the family wandering in the moonlight, the boy and his mother convinced that they’re lost, the father teasing them. It reminded me of the way Proust’s sentences roam and stray through a labyrinth of words and clauses, only to turn around—just when you are about to give up—and show you something you had always suspected but had never put into words. The sentences tell you that you haven’t really drifted far at all, and that real answers may not always be obvious but aren’t really hidden, either. Things, he reminds us, are never as scary as we thought they were, nor are we ever as stranded or as helpless as we feared.

Borrel left us for a moment to check on something inside the museum, and we spent some time discussing our favorite Proust passages. We all wondered which gate Swann’s prototype would come through in the evenings, and where the aunts had been sitting when they refused to thank him for his gift but finally consented to say something so indirect that Swann failed to realize that they actually were thanking him.

“It all seems so small,” said the Englishman, who was visibly disappointed by the house.

My thoughts drifted to a corner of the garden. The weather was growing colder, and yet I was thinking of Marcel’s summer days, and of my own summer days as well, and of the garden where, deaf to the world, I had found myself doing what Proust described in his essay “On Reading”:

> giving more attention and tenderness to characters in books than to people in real life, not always daring to admit how much I loved them . . . those people, for whom I had panted and sobbed, and whom, at the close of the book, I would never see again, and no longer know anything about. . . . I would have wanted so much for these books to continue, and if that were impossible, to have other information on all those characters, to learn now something about their lives, to devote *mine to things that might not* be entirely foreign to the love they had inspired in me and whose object I was suddenly missing . . . beings who tomorrow would be but names on a forgotten page, in a book having no connection with life.

THE guided tour took more than two hours. It ended, as all guided tours do, in the gift shop. The guests were kindly reminded that, despite the impromptu nature of today’s visit, they shouldn’t forget to pay for their tickets. Everyone dutifully scrambled to buy Proust memorabilia. I toyed with the idea of buying a Proust watch on whose dial were inscribed the opening words of “À la Recherche du Temps Perdu”: “*Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure.*” But I knew I’d never wear it.

The visitors began talking of heading back to Paris. I was almost tempted to hitch a ride with one of them, but Borrel had promised to take me for a night walk through the streets of Illiers-Combray and then accompany me to the train station. The others stood idly about in the evening air, obviously reluctant to put Illiers-Combray behind them. They exchanged addresses and telephone numbers. “Proust is a must,” I heard the Argentine say, an infatuated giggle in his voice. When Borrel left the shop to lock the back door, I was suddenly alone.

As I looked out the window at the garden where the Proust family had dined on warm summer evenings, I was seized with a strange premonition of asthma. How could Marcel have ever loved such a place? Or had he never loved it? Had he loved only the act of returning to it on paper, because that was how he lived his life—first by wanting to live it, and later by remembering having wanted to, and ultimately by writing about the two? The part in between—the actual living—was what had been lost.

Proust's garden was little more than a place where he had once yearned to be elsewhere—never the primal scene or the ground zero. Illiers itself was simply a place where the young Proust dreamed of a better life to come. But, because the dream never came true, he had learned to love instead the place where the dream was born. That life did happen, and happened so intensely, to someone who seemed so reluctant to live it is part of the Proustian miracle.

This is the irony that greets all Proust pilgrims: they go in search of things that Proust remembered far better than he had ever really known them, and which he yearned to recover more than he had ever loved them. In the end, like the boy mentioned by Freud who liked to lose things because he enjoyed finding them, Proust realized that he couldn't write about anything unless he thought he had lost it first. Perhaps I, too, had come here in order to lose Combray, if only to rediscover it in the pages I knew I would read on the way home.

My train wasn't due for an hour and a half, and Anne Borrel invited me to have a cup of tea at her house before our walk. We closed the door to the museum and set off down dark and deserted alleys.

"Illiers gets so empty," she said, sighing.

"It must be lonely," I said.

"It has its plusses."

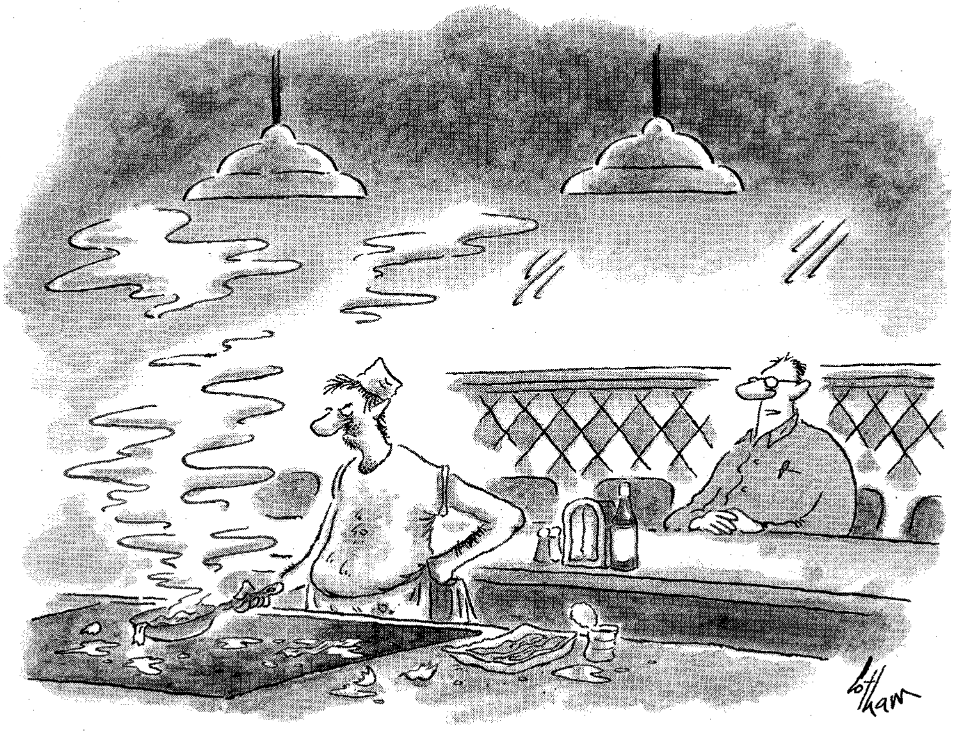
Her house was bigger than Proust's and had a far larger garden and orchard. This seemed odd to me—like finding that the gatekeeper owns a faster car and has better central heating than the owner of the palace.

As we headed back to the train station after our tea, I walked quickly. Borrel tried to stop long enough to show me the spot where the Prousts had returned from their Sunday promenades, but I didn't want to miss my connection to Paris. It seemed a shame that, after so many years, this longed-for moonlit walk, so near at hand, should be the very thing I'd forfeit. But the last thing I needed was to be sentenced to a sleepless night in Proust's boyhood town. I alluded to a possible next time. Borrel mentioned spring, when Proust's favorite flower, the hawthorn, would be in bloom. But I knew, and perhaps she knew, too, that I had no plan to return.

ON my way to Paris, I skimmed through the pages of "Combray," the first chapter of "In Search of Lost Time." As I read about the steeples of Martinville or Tante Léonie, eternally perched in her bedroom, on the first floor, overlooking Rue Saint-Jacques, it occurred to me that I had rushed back to the book not to verify the existence of what I had just seen but to make certain that those places I remembered and loved as though my own childhood had been spent among them had not been altered by the reality of the dull, tile-roofed town shown to me by Anne Borrel.

I wanted to return to my first reading of Proust—the way, after seeing a film based on a novel, we struggle to resurrect our private portrait of its characters and their world, only to find that the images we've treasured for so long have vanished, like ancient frescoes exposed to daylight by a thoughtless archeologist. Would my original image of a stone villa with a spacious dining room and a wide staircase leading to the child's solitary bedroom be able to withstand the newly discovered little house with its squeaky wooden stairwell and drab, sunless rooms? And could this tawdry garden really be the glorious place where Marcel read away entire afternoons on a wicker chair under a chestnut tree, lost to the voices of those calling him inside and to the hourly chime of the church of Saint-Hilaire—whose real name, as I had found out that day, was not Saint-Hilaire but Saint-Jacques, which, moreover, was not really the name of the street watched over by Tante Léonie, who, it turned out, was herself more likely to have been an uncle.

Inside the sepia cover of "Swann's Way" I searched also for the sense of wonder I had brought to it that summer evening more than thirty years before, when I'd had the good fortune to be with a man who was the first person to mention Proust to me and who, because he was unable to give me so many things then, had only this to give me, and gave it tentatively, self-consciously, as though he were giving part of himself, as he told me about Proust—how Proust remembered things that everyone else seemed to forget, how he saw through people though they still managed to fool him, and how he did all those things in sentences that were ever so long—and steered me, as we rushed to buy the first volume before the stores closed, to a writer I have since loved above all others, not just because of who he was and what he wrote, or because of who I became the more I read him, but because on that late-summer evening I already knew I had just received, perhaps without my father's knowing it, his dearest, most enduring gift of love. ♦



*"I'll have the prayer breakfast."*

## FICTION

# HOTTER

### BY LILY TUCK

ALREADY it is ninety humid degrees in the shade of the mango trees that border each side of the road to Angkor Wat. Overhead, the sky is bleached white from the heat. I feel a drop of sweat slide down the inside of my arm, and my cotton skirt is stuck to the plastic seat of the pedicab. The pedicab driver, his narrow back hunched over the handlebars, is pedalling his bicycle rapidly down the dirt road; the muscles in his calves look like the banyan-tree roots that twine and twist in the jungle here. I turn my head slightly to look back at my husband, who is sitting in another pedicab, trailing three or four yards behind us. The drivers are racing each other.

In his high-school French, Peter, my husband, explained how he would pay the pedicab driver who won the race twice the fare. *Payer double.* He also gestured with his hands. Now I can hear him yelling encouragement to his driver: *Allez-y*, man! Go *vite!*

I speak better French than Peter. I spent my junior year abroad in France, in Paris, and French literature was my major in college. I wrote my thesis on the poet Rimbaud. When I told Peter, he thought I'd said "Rambo."

Before we came here, I told Peter I was afraid that Angkor might be dangerous. I told him that I had read how tourists were robbed at gunpoint; that two tourists were shot. Peter answered that those tourists went to visit out-of-the-way sites, sites half-buried in the jungle. We, on the other hand, would visit only the larger sites, the restored sites.

Peter also said, Who knows what will happen next in Southeast Asia? We

ABBY ROBINSON, "PINK PILLOWS" (1995)

have to take advantage of this window of opportunity.

Besides our two pedicabs, there is no other traffic on the road to Angkor Wat. Only a woman dressed in a printed sarong is walking down the road; she is carrying two baskets on a long pole balanced across her shoulders. The baskets look heavy and bounce up and down as she walks. The woman stops and watches us go by.

*Bonjour, Madame!*

Without thinking about it, childishly, I cross my fingers. I hope that my pedicab driver wins. He is older and thinner and looks more deserving than my husband's pedicab driver. His shirt and shorts, although clean, are patched and worn. I imagine that he has a wife who squats all day fanning the coal flames, and too many children who have nothing to eat but rice.

My pedicab driver turns his head slightly and looks back. Despite his strenuous efforts, he is grinning. I sit very straight and very still. I also keep my legs that are damp with sweat tightly together. If I move them apart, my legs make an ugly smacking noise.

I think about what I might jettison out of the pedicab to lighten our load: *mes souliers*? But my sandals don't weigh much and my feet are not as tough as those of the Buddhist monks dressed in their saffron robes whom I see walking around barefoot all day. *Mes bijoux*? My wedding ring is just a thin band of gold and probably weighs less than an ounce. The only thing worth throwing out, I think, is the guidebook, which I hold tightly in my lap and must weigh nearly a pound.

The guidebook would land under the mango trees, in the bamboo thicket and among the lianas that border the dirt road. Pages fluttering, a few might tear off: *The palaces were built out of wood and have since disappeared; only the religious edifices built out of stone remain.*

Peter says that Angkor is made up of hard minerals in a paste of sand, and, since water dissolves this paste, Angkor will soon disintegrate. Peter should know; he is an engineer. He is building runways in a town in northeast Thailand on the border of Laos.

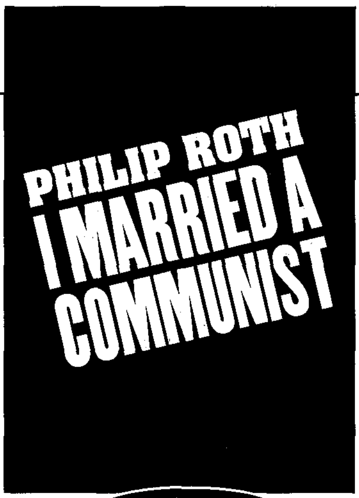
*Louse.*

*Lay-oss*, he corrects me.

Yesterday afternoon, during the flight from Bangkok to Siem Reap, the plane strained and bucked through thick gray clouds. Most of the passengers got sick; even the pretty Thai stewardess got sick. Moments before we landed the sky finally cleared, and from the plane window spread out below us I saw Angkor for the first time. I had had no idea that it was so large, so vast.

*Angkor has a system of canals and waterworks called "barays" that are as large as*

*The first choice for every fiction lover...*



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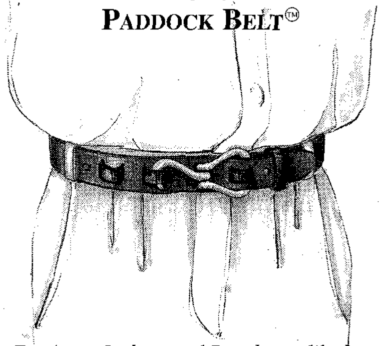

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*lakes,* the guidebook says. *The area is over two hundred square miles and once included six hundred monuments.*

I turn my head again to have another look. Now it seems as if the pedicab with my husband in it is catching up. The distance between us is only a few feet. I am able to read the time, upside down—nine-twenty—on the watch around my husband's pedicab driver's wrist. My husband is laughing as he waves at me in a familiar and triumphant way.

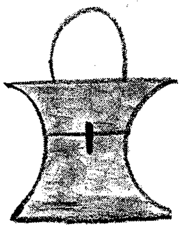
PERSPIRING and stopping often to catch our breath, we climb the narrow steep crumbling steps that lead us up to the three terraces of Angkor Wat. *Each step marks a stage in the solar cycle, and the terrace represents the tiers of the world,* the guidebook says. I am in front of Peter, and, occasionally, to spur me on, he taps me on the behind.

Don't, I say. Stop.

*Giddyup.* Peter taps me on the behind again harder.

When we reach the top of the temple, we have a view of the countryside, which is made up mainly of stone ruins and jungle. The stone ruins look like large piles of bleached bones, and except for a broken tower here and there the ruins form geometric patterns—squares within squares, within more squares. Rows of palm trees with their high arching leaves mark ancient overgrown paths while, all around, the water in the canals, the *barays,* lies stagnant and still. I see a man fishing from the bank of the farthermost canal like a distant mirage.

*The Thais sacked Angkor in 1431.* Peter has the guidebook now. *The Thais conquered the Khmers and took the women back as slaves.*



Slaves, I say. You'd have liked that.

Yeah, Peter agrees as he puts his arms around me and draws me to him. He holds me so tight that I have trouble breathing. Leaning down, he kisses me on the lips.

Peter, no, I say.

Why? There's no one around. Peter kisses me again. Hmm, good. Salty, he says as he kisses me on the neck.

Peter, don't, I say again. Later. Not here.

I can feel him start to lift up the back of my skirt. I try to move but Peter is holding me around the waist and one of his legs is wrapped around one of mine. I feel him fumble with the elastic of my underpants at the same time as I can feel him get an erection.

Quick, he says.

You must be crazy. I manage to pull away from him. You want me to get pregnant?

Even here at the top of Angkor Wat, there is not a breath of wind, not a hint of a breeze.

Hot. With one hand, I make a fanning motion.

Peter turns away and does not answer me right away. Damn right, he finally says.

When we were first married, my husband wanted to make love every day—sometimes he made love twice or even three times—no matter where we happened to be: in the back seat of a car, on a blanket in a horse field, and once, inside a closet, knocking over shoes. Now that we have been married nearly a year and Peter goes to the town in northeast Thailand on the border of Laos for a couple of days every week, he comes back tired, he says, and he makes love less.

This last time when Peter came back from the town in northeast Thailand I went through all the clothes he had thrown into the laundry hamper. I took his khaki pants and turned the pockets inside out. A few coins slid out of one of the pockets; in the other pocket I found a matchbook—the matchbook cover advertised *Le Bambou Bar*—along with a few wooden toothpicks and a crumpled white napkin. Carefully, I unfolded the napkin—would I find a phone number? lipstick? dried semen? I found nothing. Next, I picked up my husband's shirt. The shirt smelled of gasoline and sweat and of Peter's deodorant. It was still faintly damp and there were yellowish-brown rings under the arms. Peter's underwear was quite clean.

Something shrieks as it flies high above our heads.

What was that? In spite of the heat I shiver.

Kingfisher, Peter answers.

Who knows, I say. Maybe, it's the reincarnation of King Jayavarnam.

According to my calculations—his

## A CASTLE FROM A DREAM

The city was castlelike, compact, dense, multilayered, like the edifices of Piranesi. Red brick predominated—it signified civilization—and, on the other side of the river, wilderness began. He marched quickly; his companions, a he and a she, could hardly keep up. And suddenly he realized how abstraction changes into reality: the spicy scents from stores, an enticing vapor from passed-by kitchens, huge flitches of hams, taverns full of wine drinkers, oh, to be thus restored to the senses, only that and nothing else.

—Czeslaw Milosz

*(Translated, from the Polish, by the author and Robert Hass.)*

attempt now and one last night don't count—Peter has not made love to me in eight days, in over a week.

On the way down the steep steps, I follow Peter. I also cling to what remains of the stone railing carved in the shape of a snake. My leather-soled sandals are slippery and, unaccountably, my legs are shaking.

Along with me and my husband, there are two or three other small groups of tourists. One group is French, and I can hear their shrill voices long before I see them standing in front of a bas-relief that depicts Vishnu churning the sea of milk. *La mer de lait*, their guide explains—the ambrosia that bestows immortality.

*Im-mor-tel*, a Frenchwoman in a red halter top repeats in a nasal voice and laughs.

The Frenchwoman and Peter exchange a look.

Last night when we checked into the hotel in Siem Reap we forgot and left the window open and the light on in our bedroom, and when we returned from dinner our bedroom was filled with moths. Not just moths, I pointed out to my husband, but all kinds of flying insects I had never seen before. A lot of the insects were caught in the folds of the mosquito net that hung over our bed, and even after Peter shook the net out and turned off the light they remained clinging to it.

Don't worry, the bugs are harmless, he said in bed, pushing up my nightgown.

No, I said, pushing away his hand. My stomach.

Your stomach? What's wrong with your stomach?

I don't know, I answered, turning away from him. The noodles at dinner, maybe.

As we reach the bottom steps of Angkor Wat, we meet a Japanese couple who are on their way up. The Japanese couple smile and move aside to let us pass.

Near the entrance gate of the temple, a vender is selling soft drinks. Half a dozen bottles of Coca-Cola and the orange drink Fanta are lying in a bucket of water. When I pick up a bottle out of the water, the water is warm. Hot, nearly. When the vender offers me a straw, I shake my head. A bunch of flies are swarming on the rim of the glass that holds the straws.

Sipping the Fanta straight out of the bottle, I walk beside my husband to the next site.

Tonight, Peter, I tell him. We can make love in the hotel tonight.

Peter does not answer me.

Two little boys are following us: *Hello! Hello!*

*Amelican!*

One little boy makes the sound of a gun going off—*bang bang*—the same sound in every language. The other little boy has something wrong with one eye; only the white part shows.

*In 802, King Jayavarnam II founded Angkor as the seat of his kingdom. Angkor comes from the Sanskrit word "nagara" which means "city"*—I am reading aloud from the guidebook. Are you listening, Peter? In a sing-song voice and mimicking an Asian accent, I begin

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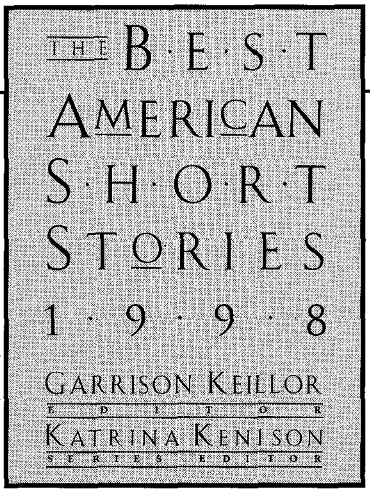
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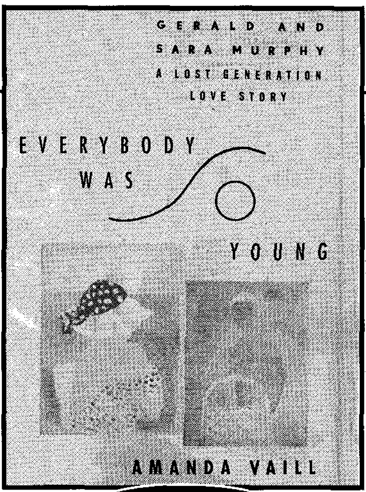
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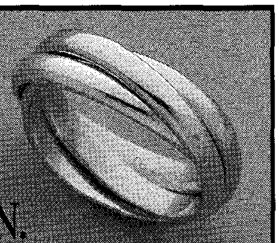

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again: *Ankle koms flom se Sansclit wold*—Yeah, sure. Bang, bang.

By the side of the road, slim columns of red earth rise several feet high. They look like sculptures and are the homes of termite ants.

TWO rows of stone giants guard Angkor Thom, the capital of Angkor; the giants wrestle stone serpents in their arms.

I'll take a picture of you, Peter offers.

I straddle a stone serpent and put my arms around a stone giant's neck. I kiss the giant on the lips.

Great! Peter shouts. Again! This time a French kiss!

Your turn, I say.

Wait till I find another one of those dancing nymphs—what are they called?—the ones with the long skirts and naked tits.

*Apsaras.*

One day when I was not wearing a bra and, according to Peter, anyone who wanted to could look down my dress at my breasts, an insect of some kind—a bumblebee maybe or a big horsefly, I never found out which—flew inside my dress and in my frenzy I forgot that the zipper on that particular dress was located on the right instead of the left side and I ripped the dress the whole length from the sleeve to the hem trying to get it off quickly. Peter, who was watching, said it served me right for wearing a low-cut dress like that. Also, he said, it reminded him of a story he had heard once about a World War II pilot who had to parachute out of his plane, but it turned out that he was left-handed, so that by the time he reached the ground he had nearly eviscerated himself trying in vain to find the rip cord.

EACH of the fifty towers of the Bayon is topped with four huge smiling heads. The heads have big lips and their smiles are full of mystery. The heads are supposed to represent King Jayavarnam, but they are too beautiful, I think. King Jayavarnam, I read in the guidebook, was a leper and became king only when he was in his late sixties.

All of a sudden, as I am looking up at the huge heads, I feel dizzy. Nauseated, too. Except for the bottle of Fanta, I have not drunk or eaten anything since the noodles at dinner yesterday—not even the glass of weak tea that was left in our hotel bedroom, which I used instead to brush my teeth. I sit down. I put my head between my knees the way I know people who feel faint are supposed to.

I have been careful—the one time, on a trip to Chiang Mai, I forgot to bring along my diaphragm and we had sex, Peter came in my mouth instead—and I always use some form of protection, but should I get pregnant here Peter has promised me that I can go home. I can stay with my parents, he has said, and wait there for the baby. Sometimes at night, after we have finished making love and Peter has already turned over and I can hear him snoring lightly and I am too hot still and cannot sleep, I try to imagine that the geckos I hear crawling on the window screens are crickets. I try to imagine that the frangipani tree outside the bedroom window with its cloying, too sweet blossoms is the sturdy maple tree in my parents' garden. I try to imagine what it would be like to sleep under a warm goose-down quilt in a single bed again, what it would be like to feel cool, cold even. But trying to imagine this always defeats me.

What are you doing anyway, Anne? Peter asks. He is frowning. He is sitting on top of a fallen pillar, and has taken off one of his sneakers.

Nothing, I answer.

I got bitten by something, he says. He holds up his foot to me. See. It hurts like hell, he says. A red ant.

Maybe the ant is the reincarnation of King Jayavarnam—I start again.

Anne! Do you mind shutting up about King Jaya-what's-his-face? It takes only a dozen or so of these ant bites to kill an average-size man.

Hotter.

A blue butterfly hovers and alights for a moment on one of the stone head's big smiling lips.

*Him!* I think.

AS we are leaving Angkor Thom, I look over my shoulder.

Can you quit that? Peter says. You're giving me the creeps. The next temple isn't far. Just over there.

The path has turned into an overgrown track full of ruts; in some places we have to walk single file. I try to stay within Peter's diminishing shadow; I try to step on his back, on his head.

I don't know. It looks kind of deserted here. What's it called? I ask as I look up the site in the guidebook.

*Preah Khan.*

Preah Khan? The guidebook says that Preah Khan is not one of the restored sites, I tell my husband. Preah Khan is an unrestored site. I don't see anyone else going there, I also tell him. I'm worried—

Anne, that's your trouble. Peter stops for a moment and puts his arm around me. Relax, will you.

I shrug his arm off.

During my junior year abroad, I went to Normandy with a boy named Jean-Claude. Jean-Claude and I took the train from Paris to Cherbourg, and there we rented bicycles. We planned to cycle along the coast, camp out in farmers' fields, and look at the beaches. The first day, on Omaha Beach, we clambered on top of an abandoned rusty tank, then Jean-Claude climbed down inside one of the bunkers. I remember how I would not go with him, I said I was afraid of a live grenade still. Jean-Claude stayed in the bunker for such a long time that I began to worry about him. When, finally, he emerged, we walked back up the beach to where there was a monument. The monument was in the shape of an obelisk and was set on top of some granite steps; the granite was warm from the sun and we sat down. Also, by then we were hungry. Jean-Claude and I opened our backpacks and spread out the salami, bread, cheese, and wine we had bought for lunch. After we had eaten the bread, salami, and cheese and drunk the wine, we lay down on the steps and Jean-Claude began to kiss me. I closed my eyes and I still remember how Jean-Claude's kisses tasted of warm red wine, rust, and the sea. Then, just as Jean-Claude was starting to unbutton my blouse, I heard someone run up the granite steps and yell at us: *Mais, alors! N'avez vous aucun respect pour les morts!*

The Gate of Victory, the name of the gate through which we enter, is surmounted by a tower with four more smiling heads of King Jayavarnam. A banyan tree has grown over the tower and a tangled network of roots and branches has completely encircled the huge stone heads—breaking off a nose, mashing an ear, blinding an eye, turning the smile of the old leper king into a sneer.

Look. Peter points. You can see the brick underneath the sandstone. You can see the original corbelling.

Inside the unrestored temple, we have to step over fallen lintels, stones, pillars. Another banyan tree has spread its roots, cracking the floor, toppling the roof.

See the original what? I ask, as a troop of gibbons leaps into the branches directly over our heads; the gibbons shake the foliage and chatter down at us. *Whoop, whoop, whoop.*

Something small and hard hits me on the cheek.

Hey!

Then more nuts start to rain down, hitting me and my husband. Peter leans down on the ground and picks up a handful of nuts; he starts throwing the nuts back at the gibbons.

Goddam monkeys! he yells.

On the way back to Siem Reap in the pedicabs—this time the drivers are pedalling slowly and not racing each other—we suddenly hear yelping. The yelping comes from the bamboo thickets and lianas that border the side of the road and to me it sounds pitiful and like a baby crying almost.

Stop! I lean forward and tell the pedicab driver. *Arrêtez!* We have to stop!

Likewise, my husband motions to his pedicab driver and we both get out of the pedicabs.

Be careful, I say.

Our drivers do not appear concerned; my pedicab driver is cleaning his ear with his fingernail—the pinkie fingernail grown long expressly for that purpose.

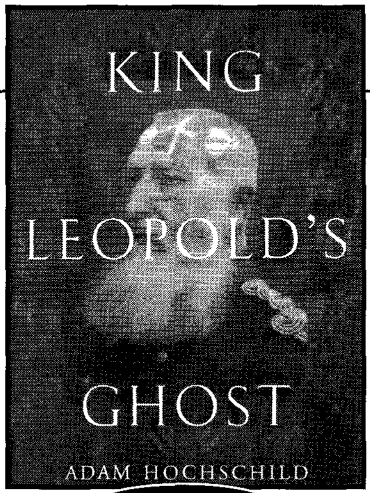
Oh, God! As if to stop me, my husband holds out his hand.

What is it? I ask.

It takes me several seconds to understand what I am looking at: two mongrel dogs are stuck together. The male dog is making awkward plunging motions while the female dog has got herself grotesquely twisted around and is being dragged along on her bony back; between her legs, what is visible of the male dog's penis is a glistening bright red.

Once again, I feel dizzy. I can taste the Fanta rising up in my throat.

In their frenzy, both dogs are also biting at each other. The female dog, the dog that is being dragged on her back, I notice, has bitten herself. Her tongue is full of little marks, little bloody tooth marks. The yelping we heard, however, has stopped. ♦



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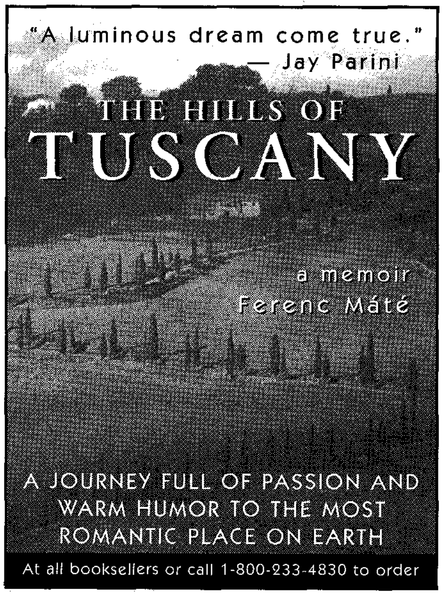

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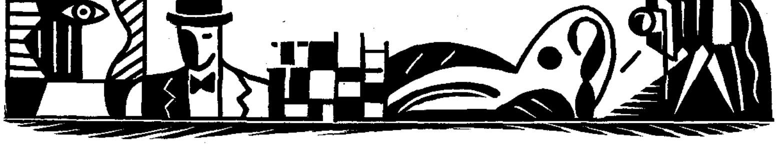
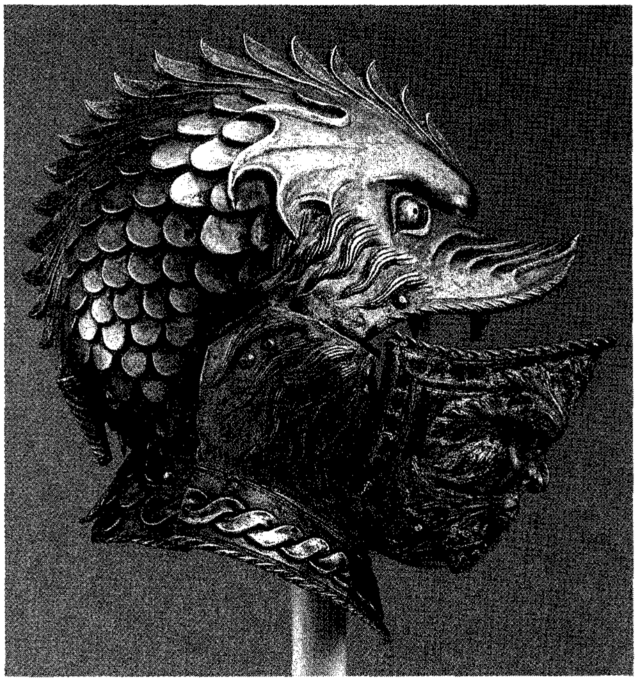


# HEAVY METAL

*Fantasy, not war, was the stock-in-trade of Renaissance armorers.*

BY SIMON SCHAMA

JUST how big was J. P. Morgan's head? Could it, for example, have fitted into the fantastically embossed Renaissance helmet that he once owned, and which is one of the showstoppers in the Met's current exhibition of sixteenth-century Italian armor? It's nice to imagine the banker, his head as yet unswollen by his fortune, sneaking to his display cabinet in the dead of night, extracting the steel-and-gold headgear—grasping it by the siren who is thrown backward over its coxcomb, her upper torso wrapped in a skintight antique bodysuit—and trying it on for size. If he had inspected himself in the mirror, he would have been confronted by the petrifying glare of the Medusa punched into the front of the helmet, complete with writhing serpent coiffure. But then, like others among New York's antique-helmet-owning plutocracy (the Harknesses, Stuyvesants, and the like who were members of the Armor and Arms Club), Morgan might have fancied himself a modern Perseus: Morgan the Gorgon-slayer.



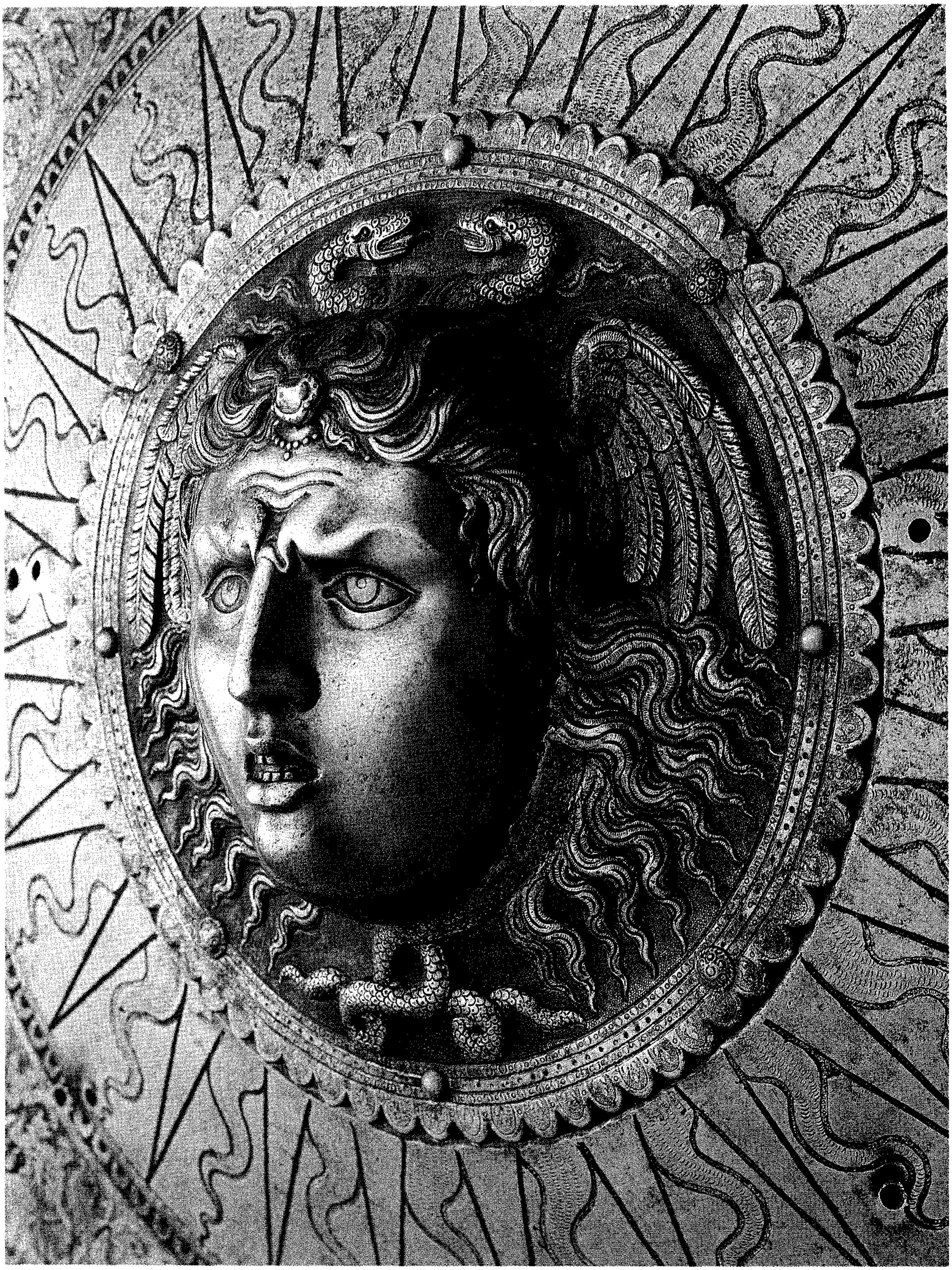
BOTH: MUSÉE DE L'ARMÉE, HÔTEL NATIONAL DES INVALIDES, PARIS

To walk through the Met show is to enter a dark glade of metallic male fantasy, in a Renaissance version that is at once archaically remote and instantly familiar: the overwrought dreams of impenetrability, the tight-contoured steel cladding of fabulous personae. "Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance: Filippo Negroli and His Contemporaries" might just as well have been called "The Origins of Spiderman": the godlike thorax, the grotesque animal-human mutations, the bat-wing mask, and the Apollonian kiss-curls are all present in force. So, although an exhibition of Renaissance armor may sound like an event exclusively for chain-mail mavens—people who like to trade banter about pauldrons, greaves, and sabatons—the Met show is actually a popular spectacle, which ought to draw the same kind of crowds that flocked to the Versace show at the Costume Institute last winter, and for some of the same reasons. For this is a show about the forging (in both senses of the word) of secondary personae—the creation of surrogate body casings. What it's not about is the practical clankety-clunk and whackety-whack of battle. Of course, you'll learn a lot about rivets, if that's your sort of thing. But the grim visage of war is not much in evidence in a show that is altogether more Schwarzenegger than Schwarzkopf.

Few of the jaw-dropping ensembles gathered here, from museum collections in Russia, Spain, Austria, and Italy, ever encountered a crossbow fired in anger, or were meant to equip knights and princes in the field. For centuries, the job of the master armorer had simply been to provide maximum protection against the various unpleasantnesses that would come the way of cavalry: arrows from above, sword and lance thrusts from dead on, and spear-stabbing from below. The properly attired knight thus cantered into action encased from head to toe, with no orifice left unguarded. He had his choice of what the historians call "pig-faced," "dog-faced," or "frog-mouthed" visors, all of which offered only the tiniest slits for sight and breath. By the fifteenth century, though, battles were being decided by more than just the headlong charge of hardware on horseback. The need for maneuverability among the different units of an army—infantry, bowmen, and cavalry—encouraged the development of flexibly articulated plates, and open-faced helmets, so that commanders could get more than a letterbox glimpse of the action around them. And for the first time armor was assigned a psychological purpose, on the principle that maximum awe-inspiring display might actually impress a potential enemy enough for him to desist from risking combat altogether.

So, paradoxically, armor was at its most extravagantly decorative in the middle of the Renaissance, precisely when mounted horsemen were becoming vulnerable to companies of tightly massed pikemen (hence the emphasis on the protection of the lower limbs and extremities), and were increasingly exposed to the firepower of harquebuses and muskets. By the end of the sixteenth century, armorers were being required to put their metals through "trials," by having pistols fired point-blank at the plates. In 1580, Sir Henry Lee, Master of the Armoury to Queen Elizabeth, sadly reported that the plate "made in the Offyce and of the metall of Houngere [Hungary] helde out and more than alittel dent of the pellet nothing perced," while "the other clene shotte thereowe. . . . Thus much for the Ynglishe metall."

The dreams and the gorgeous get-



*A fierce dolphin's-head helmet (left) and a Medusa shield made in Renaissance Milan, the haute-couture center of armory.*

up of chivalry lived on long after its military importance had withered away. The lustre of polished armor caught the sun in jousts and tournaments, parades and processions, which in the world of the high Renaissance were far more than idle entertainments for the horsy classes. Tournaments were the indices of magnificence—ostentatiously ritualized displays that purchased loyalty, intimidated the envious, and gave the disaffected serious pause. But, even as the great absolutist princes of Europe pursued their Machiavellian politics, they still, at some level, conceived of themselves as the authentic flower of chivalry. Henry VIII of England took swaggering pride in his prowess in the joust, and the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V regarded the cult of Christian knighthood with the utmost seriousness. Charles, who had been reared amid Burgundian heraldry and pageantry, remained all his long life a Boy Scout who never quite grew up. His Captain Marvel comics were "Amadis of Gaul" and Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso," with its ripping yarns of Carolingian knights going up against sorcerers, Saracens, and many-headed monsters. At some point, Charles set eyes on the extraordinary steel helmet made for Francesco della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino, which is on display here: it took the form of an entire heroic head, with tightly wound curls and nobly protruding ears, pierced to carry pendant earrings. Such things had apparently been made for the Romans when they acted out the jousts of the Trojans recorded in Virgil's Aeneid. But nothing like the curly-haired helm had ever been seen in modern armor, whether functional or fanciful. Needless to say, the Emperor had to have one, and in short order Filippo Negroli, of Milan, was commissioned to make one like Urbino's. In fact, Negroli shrewdly went one better by supplying Charles with an idealized version of the imperial face, sporting a full set of gilded mustaches and a forked beard. Negroli even understood how to make the Emperor's thwarted dreams come true, if only in silver and gold: a turbanned Turk whom Charles had conspicuously failed to vanquish appears on the comb of another spectacular helmet, in the guise of a helpless prisoner, with his hands tied behind his back and his long mustaches painfully gripped by the deities of Victory and Fame.

It's not fortuitous that Negroli was a Milanese. Then, as now, Milan, perched at the Alpine crossroads between the worlds of metal and the worlds of silk, was the most inventive fashion center in Europe. Its craftsmen, or milaners (as we would say, milliners), were in demand in all the courts of Europe. And their ingenuity with metals was such that they could make of steel or gold something infinitely mutable—something beaten out of its solid state into lacy fronds and webs, or made to mimic the natural drape of cloth or the swelling of human muscle.

The Negroli family had begun its career in the fifteenth century, working for the Sforza dukes of Milan. By the time the third generation came along, in the early sixteenth century, a business decision had to be made. Were the Negrolis to gear up as suppliers to the international trade, producing large batches of relatively affordable suits for men-at-arms and knights in the saddle? Or were they to go strictly upmarket, concentrating on the metallic equivalent of haute couture? Filippo Negroli and his extended family opted to be artists, not industrialists (and probably made a lot less money as a result). Their forte was fantasy—erudite fantasy that catered to the omnivorous hunger for the classical world, which was then being dug up, catalogued, and displayed more than at any time since the fall of Rome. Prompted by pattern books and transcriptions of Hellenic and Roman sarcophagi, archeological finds of Corinthian and Phrygian helmets, and antique busts and shields, Negroli and his sons created headgear or breastplates that could transform the wearer into a new Alexander, Hannibal, or Scipio. They obliged their customers' demands for showy references to humanist learning; hence the dense allusions to classical mythology and military history which crowded the decoration of the armor. But they were also shrewd enough to grasp the unspoken need for a kind of anti-armor—something that pretended to expose the body while actually covering it, in a brazen show of heroic invulnerability. Thus, undressed to kill, the run-of-the-mill condottiere stuck in a mudhole principality would turn into a St. George with a trophy dragon's head at his feet, or a Hercules who wore on his own head the pelt of the Nemean lion he had strangled in Labor No. 1.

While lion armor is everywhere in the exhibit, there are also pieces demonstrating that when the Negroli group got serious they could produce astounding phantasmagoria to sit on their customers' heads: killer dolphins, unclassifiable spiny-snouted reptiles direct from the bestiary of Bosch and Brueghel, or, in one astonishing instance, a tiny crocodile head erupting from the end of a human tongue.

But is it Art? Giorgio Vasari, the biographer of Renaissance painters and sculptors, evidently thought so, for he included Filippo Negroli in his pantheon. And there were plenty of bona-fide painters—Giulio Romano, Leonardo, Pollaiuoulo—who produced armor designs for fabrication. In fact the transformations wrought by Negroli and his peers—the treatment of metal as if it were fabric, the abstract exuberance of their patterning (etching was an armor decorator's technique long before it was a medium of printing), the Rabelaisian exoticism of their imagination—make the anachronistically modern distinction between art and craft moot. What the word "art" meant to the generation of the Negrolis was an almost alchemical craft: the mastery of a mystery. And the great armorers of Italy were famous for their jealous guardianship of metallurgical secrets: they were rumored to dip their metals in miraculous waters or to hammer them with inconceivably subtle tools. Above all, they were deemed artists because they could harmonize qualities that would normally be at war with one another. They could forge suits of armor hard enough to withstand the glancing blows of the lance and sword but so flexibly articulated that their wearers were as light and limber as if they fought naked—and, above all, had a sporting chance to get back on a horse if unseated.

No wonder, then, that seventeenth-century connoisseurs of the marvellous like Rubens and Rembrandt were avid collectors of armor and found a place for helmets, shields, swords, and cuirasses amid their arrays of precious shells, ancient cameos, and stuffed birds. Rubens was even fooled by the Negrolis' classicizing skill into supposing that one of his own helmets was a Roman original. But, for every precious piece of armor that survived (its constituent pieces often split up among different royal and aristocratic collections), countless suits of armor of the more workaday kind rusted peacefully somewhere at the back of a barn, or were cannibalized into lowly ironmongery like steelyard weights or lock casings. It was only in the early nineteenth century that the paladins of the Gothic revival—antiquarian enthusiasts of everything medieval—began to publish comprehensive, illustrated histories of armor and encouraged patrons, from kings downward, to rescue, restore, and exhibit the hollow warriors in vaulted galleries or in grand halls.

This Gothic passion did not work its way into the taste of the American plutocracy for another century. Its great champion in New York was a Columbia University ichthyologist glorying in the name of Bashford Dean, who must surely be the only scholar to have been simultaneously curator of the American Museum of Natural History and of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was Dean who, in 1917, acquired the Negroli helmet from J. P. Morgan, albeit under the mistaken impression that it had been made for King Francis I. But anything can be forgiven someone who must have walked from his installation of fishes and reptiles in one museum to a gallery dimly glittering with medieval hardware in the other—indeed, who saw a happy evolutionary connection between the segmented arthropods of the ocean floor and the metal-plated heroes of the age of chivalry. One likes to think that, were he around today, he would sit looking through the tall windows of the Met toward Central Park, survey the procession of Rollerblade helmets, Harley-Davidson jackets emblazoned with studs, and the occasional hockey-goalie mask and nod in a gesture of appreciative recognition. ♦

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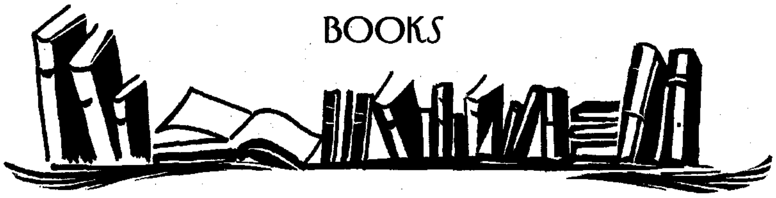


## BOOKS

# MONTALE'S SONGBOOK

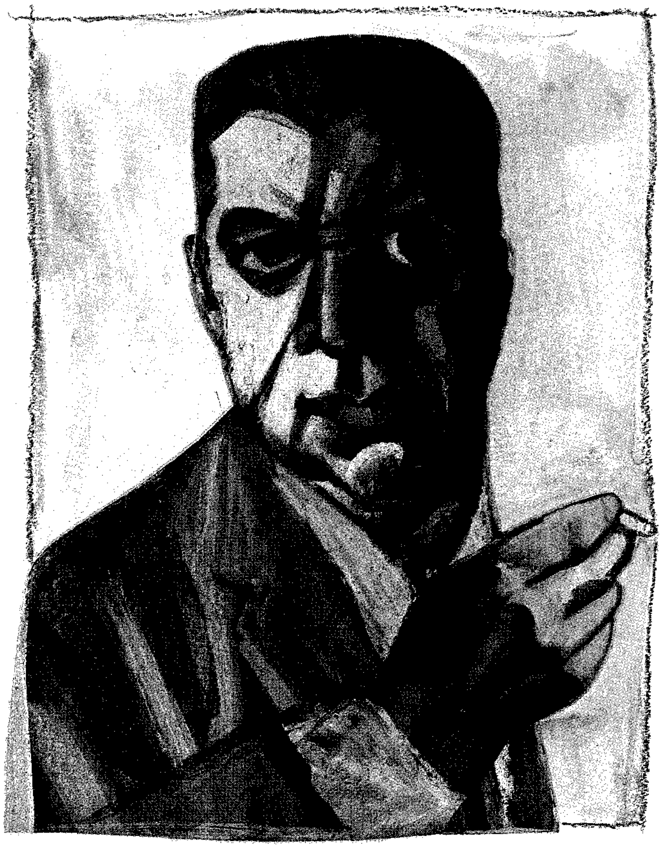
*A new translation captures the dissonant music of the Italian poet.*

BY EDWARD HIRSCH

THERE are moments in the history of literature when someone rises to the surface and takes poetry in a radically unexpected direction, which also comes to seem an inevitable one, simultaneously blowing open a tradition and fulfilling it. Eugenio Montale (1896-1981) provoked—he incarnated—one of those moments, as Paul Valéry or T. S. Eliot or Zbigniew Herbert did. Montale gave the Italian lyric a dissonant new music, a rapturous counter-eloquence. He is the Debussy of modern poetry, and in Jonathan Galassi's fresh translation of Montale's main achievement, "Collected Poems 1920-1954" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $40), the English-speaking reader is given clear access to a body of work that has a severe majesty.

The "Collected Poems" brings together three major books: "Cuttlefish Bones" ("Ossi di Seppia," 1925); "The Occasions" ("Le Occasioni," 1939), which includes his radiant sequence of twenty love poems, entitled "Motets" ("Mottetti"); and his masterpiece, "The Storm, Etc." ("La Bufera e Altro," 1956). This is the work of Montale's so-called high season, his purchase on immortality, and it has its own conclusive unity, a stony permanence. His poems are to be read "as one single poem," he said in the mid-sixties. "I consider my three books as three canticles, three phases of a human life." A complete Montale would also include the work of his final season: the more open, daily, and provisional four books that he published—following a fifteen-year hiatus—during the last decade of his life.

Galassi's book, a hefty bilingual edition, is a model of its kind. It includes an insightful afterword called "Reading Montale," in which he construes the novelistic grid underpinning Montale's often allegorical lyrics; a helpful chronology and bibliography; and exemplary annotations to all the poems. William Arrowsmith set the bar very high with the informative notes to his own four volumes of Montale translations (I especially recommend his posthumous version of "Satura," which is Montale's best late work). Galassi builds on Arrowsmith's linguistic insights and classical commentary, summarizing key Italian and American critical interpretations, and supplying a full-bodied context for reading the poet.



*Poised between a deep reverence for tradition and a powerful impulse toward innovation.*

ANDREA VENTURA

Montale cultivated a style that is intimate, stoical, sometimes hallucinatory, oddly objective. One poem begins:

> I would have liked to feel harsh and
> essential
> like the pebbles you tumble,
> gnawed by the sea brine;
> a splinter out of time in evidence
> of a cold, constant will.

Galassi stays close to Montale's mode of thought—he has achieved what the Italian master called "adherence"—offering us a poet who is compulsively readable and yet also saturated with allusions, both explosively compressed and slyly discursive. "I was aware," Montale said, "that poetry cannot function in a vacuum and that one cannot achieve concentration except in the wake of diffusion."

A thoroughgoing modernist, with his own form of postwar disillusionment, Montale entered poetry by taking the back road, the *via negativa:*

> Don't ask us for the phrase that
> can open worlds,
> just a few gnarled syllables, dry
> like a branch.
> This, today, is all that we can tell
> you:
> what we are *not*, what we do *not*
> want.

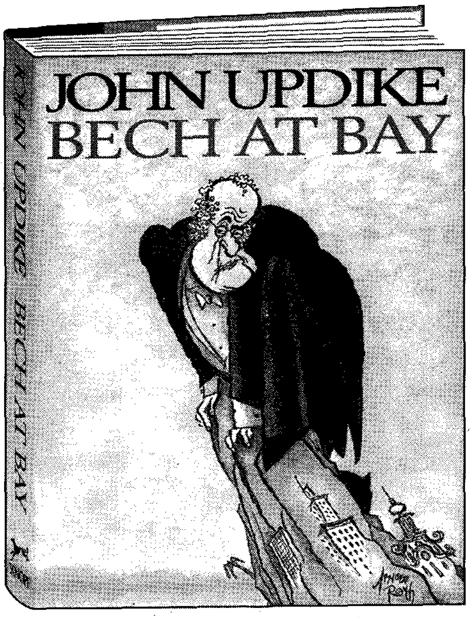
He offered his generation an antidote to public poetry, to vatic pronouncements, to the high-flown style of D'Annunzio, to the bombast of the Italian Futurists—to whatever it is in the modern temperament that longs for totalitarian order. Allergic to grandiose gestures, immune to mass hysteria, he was anti-fascist to the core, cultivating his disavowals and disaffections, practicing what he called "a superior dilettantism, rich in human and artistic experience." Montale's project may have seemed modest initially, but it soon became evident that he was engaged in a metaphysical adventure, seeking in the azure blue silences nothing less than the "final secret" of nature, "the heart of a truth":

> It's in these silences you see
> in every fleeting human
> shadow some disturbed Divinity.

Reading his poetry, one has a strange sense of being imprisoned in the cosmos. He is an aficionado of the void, of thresholds and enclosures, of stony enclaves and seacoasts. "I always begin with the real," he once wrote, and he writes often of his first landscape—a walled-in garden near the Tuscan coast, the sea churning on the other side of the cliffs, the unforgiving sun in an endless blue sky. This is the world stripped down to the bone, the "rocky and austere" Ligurian shore, where he spent summers until he was thirty years old. It is the mirror held up to his turbulent inner realm, the site of his memories and visitations, his nervous and obsessive longings, the place where he was always, as he put it, "waiting for the miracle."

Almost all of Montale's poetry is addressed to an imaginary interlocutor, a "tu," who is sometimes the reader, sometimes an unnamed companion, sometimes an absent beloved, most frequently his fierce and angelic muse Clizia and her later counterpart, the earthy vixen Volpe ("siren and redeemer in one"). Nowhere has the idea of love as a metaphysical affair had more currency than in Italian lyric poetry, where the beloved has repeatedly stood as a figure for the soul's accomplishment or liberation. For Montale, the beloved is a spur and an inspiration, a siren song, a spiritual twin, an alter ego. She becomes an angelic myth, a "goddess who won't become flesh," a sun-drenched celestial light, a cosmic force that he has absorbed into himself, a power that counters the evil in history.

Montale's beloved muse was based on Irma Brandeis, an American Italianist, but she was also a literary construction, a potent device. By framing and revealing his story as an allegorical autobiography, a work of devotion, and a songbook, he was working against—working through—a major line of descent that runs from the songs of the troubadours, who invented the idea of courtly love, through Dante's "La Vita Nuova" and Petrarch's "Canzoniere." He once wrote of tradition that it is continued "not by those who want to do so, but by those who can." It was given to Montale to lower his voice to a whisper in order to raise the lyric to a high power. His work is a modernist rupture with the past, but it is also a joyous fulfillment of Italian poetry. ♦



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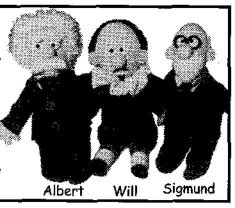

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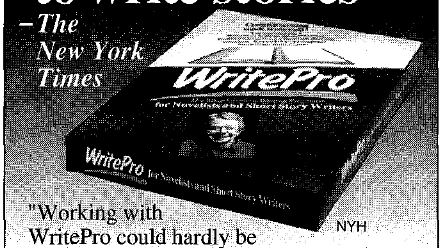

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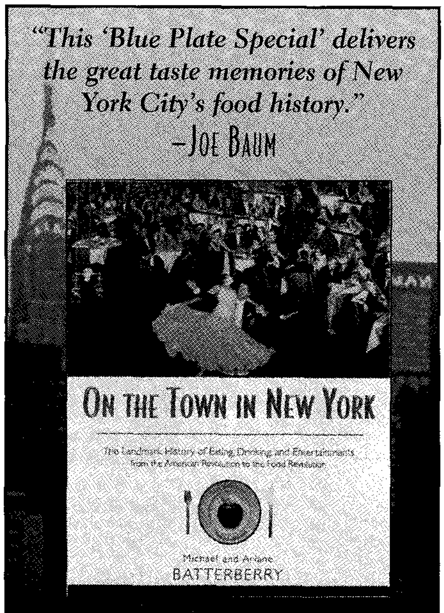
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# BOOKS FROM OUR PAGES

*A year-end roundup of books that originally appeared, in whole or in part, in The New Yorker.*

WE WISH TO INFORM YOU THAT TOMORROW WE WILL BE KILLED WITH OUR FAMILIES, by Philip Gourevitch (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25). Like his book's title, Gourevitch challenges our assumption that atrocities resistant to the sound bite are beyond our understanding. In the spring of 1994, the Hutu-dominated Rwandan government called upon its supporters to eliminate the country's Tutsi minority, and more than eight hundred thousand people were summarily massacred, most of them by machete. The author's account of the genocide and its aftermath—the evasions of the perpetrators, the despair of the survivors, and the successes and failures of those who belatedly responded to the crisis—constitutes a harsh yet elegant moral reckoning.

BIRDS OF AMERICA, by Lorrie Moore (Knopf; $23). These stories chart the intersection of the ridiculous and the tragic: a shy librarian who loves the town anarchist; a couple who realize that they're sharing their home with a drifter. "Life: what an absurd little story it always made," thinks one terminally ill woman, who, like all these characters, uses wit to lessen the sting of misfortune. Moore peers into America's loneliest perches, but her delicate touch turns absurdity into a warming vitality.

SIDEWALK CRITIC: LEWIS MUMFORD'S WRITINGS ON NEW YORK, edited by Robert Wojtowicz (Princeton Architectural Press; $27.50). Here, at last, is a selection of Mumford's Sky Line pieces from 1931 through 1940, the body of work that made him the prince of America's architecture critics. By turns amused, romantic, and biting, he took in everything from lunchrooms and laundries to landmarks like Rockefeller Center (a "melancholy pile"). To Mumford, the skyscraper was little more than a businessman's "gewgaw," yet Manhattan's burgeoning skyline enraptured him: "One wants to greet it with a cheer."

THE TREATMENT, by Daniel Menaker (Knopf; $23). Jake Singer, a neurotic Manhattan schoolteacher, has no romantic prospects and is in trouble at work when he enters analysis with Dr. Morales, a Cuban-Catholic Freudian obsessed with sex, investments, and his patient's intransigence. Is Morales a bullying clown or the tough-loving agent of change in Jake's stalled life? The writing here parallels the treatment's progress, moving from the conversational near-farce of Jake's sessions to a compassionate naturalism as he is released into the unpredictable "wild of real life."

THE BALTIMORE CASE: A TRIAL OF POLITICS, SCIENCE, AND CHARACTER, by Daniel J. Kevles (Norton; $29.95). In 1986, when an M.I.T. postdoc questioned the data in an immunological paper that her adviser had collaborated on with the Nobel laureate David Baltimore, the press leaped in on her side of the story. Her suspicions spawned a decade-long series of career-damaging inquiries and hearings, and Kevles, a historian of science, judiciously investigates the investigation. As he evaluates the star-chamber tactics of an ambitious congressman, the forensic dating of the ink in lab notebooks, and the Shakespearean arrogance on all sides, he reminds us, "In human affairs, as in science, truth is inseparable from the process employed in determining it."

A WORKING GIRL CAN'T WIN, by Deborah Garrison (Random House; $15). "To begin, I'll claim what I want / is small," says the narrator of this collection's first poem, but let the reader beware: the beginning doesn't last long. These spare, Horatian verses explore what it's like to be a young woman firmly resolved to stake a larger claim on both work and love. Whether she's recalling an unsought office confidence or the exhilaration of an all-night conversation, the author strips away the veneer of social convention, elucidating the darker strains of ordinary life.

BECH AT BAY, by John Updike (Knopf; $23). The third and, sadly, probably the final installment in the history of Updike's unlikely alter ego, the prickly, underachieving Jewish novelist Henry Bech. This volume finds Bech, now pushing eighty but still lovably vain, needy, and self-doubting, rebuffed by his many rivals and critics and doubly rewarded by his creator. Not only does Bech literally and gleefully get away with murder but, dark horse no more, he receives a surprise summons from Stockholm.

COLD NEW WORLD: GROWING UP IN A HARDER COUNTRY, by William Finnegan (Random House; $26). While the old get richer, America's children are getting poorer: Finnegan chronicles that downward spiral in four communities across the United States. And while his subjects—a fifteen-year-old dealing drugs in New Haven, a snowboarder leading *la vida loca* in the Yakima Valley, a listless California girl who idolizes Charles Manson—would probably argue that they have little in common, they all share a terrifying lack of faith in the larger world and their ability to find a place in it. As one jaded skinhead pronounces, "Every place is just as boring as this is."

A VED MEHTA READER: THE CRAFT OF THE ESSAY (Yale; $40 cloth, $18 paper). Although Mehta is perhaps best known for his autobiographies, these essays demonstrate how smoothly he can step aside to let his subjects take center stage. As he leads us through the theological paradoxes of the martyred Pastor Bonhoeffer, the imaginary landscapes of Narayan, the quarrels among Oxford philosophers, and the overflowing alleys of Calcutta, we are reminded not only of the author's catholic interests but of the creative possibilities of the essay form.

Midnight Magic, by Bobbie Ann Mason (Ecco; $25). Mason's amiable misfits are divorcées, 'Nam vets, and college dropouts who live among the tobacco fields and strip malls of rural Kentucky. These stories are littered with consolingly familiar scraps of processed American culture (MTV, Wal-Mart, Coors beer). But they are driven by the self-awareness of their characters, who, against this kitsch landscape, display a startling sensibility and dignity—sometimes even just by knowing when it's time to pick up the kids.

A Wanderer in the Perfect City, by Lawrence Weschler (Hungry Mind; $16.95). These eight "passion pieces" are not so much journalistic profiles as fully realized psychological portraits, thanks to the author's ability to inhabit the mind of whomever he depicts, whether musicologist, cartoonist, or Danish cheese exporter turned museum director. Weschler is delighted by his subjects' intellectual curiosity—the way their obsessions send their lives in unexpected, even outlandish, directions.

At Home with the Marquis de Sade, by Francine du Plessix Gray (Simon & Schuster; $27.50). In his will, dated 1806, history's most notorious libertine expressed the hope that all trace of his existence would "be erased from the memory of men." Instead, his name has spawned an adjective. In this intimate biography, Gray examines the "irony and rage and tenderness" of the voluminous correspondence between the Marquis and his wife—little of which has been translated into English—and argues that it was pious Madame's extraordinary devotion that liberated the artist to become the greatest provocateur in literature.

Blizzard of One, by Mark Strand (Knopf; $21). "Nobody sees it happening, but the architecture of our time / Is becoming the architecture of the next time," Strand writes, in his ninth collection. A poet of commanding intellect and haunting imagery, he catches glimmers that hover at the furthest reaches of consciousness, like the distant beach hotel where we "can visit / The dead decked out in their ashen pajamas," and "lie on the rumpled bed, watching / The ancient moonlight creep across the floor."

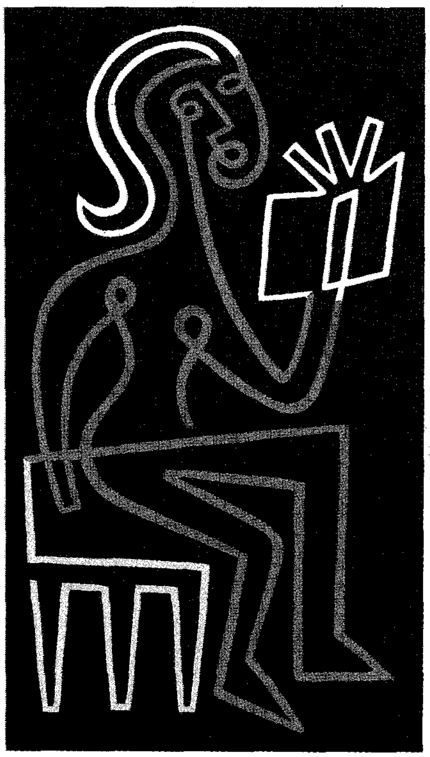
The Times Square Story, by Geoffrey O'Brien (Norton; $12.95). This is a feverishly illustrated, hardboiled fictional elegy for the old Times Square—the pre-Disney "planetary sleaze depot" of fleabag hotels and flea circuses, of pickpockets, corner preachers, and the occasional innocent dreamer. One such naïf is "the kid," who gets sucked into a B-movie production scam worthy of *True Detective.*

The Hard Work of Simple Living, drawings by Edward Koren (Chelsea Green; $16.95). Koren, who lives in a small Vermont town, where he serves as a volunteer fireman, pokes loving fun at fellow nouveau Thoreaus in his distinctively fuzzy cartoons. ("I've *done* my tour of duty on Wall Street," announces a proud farmer to his friend.) On every other page, brief quotations from assorted naturalists and back-to-the-landers testify to the joys of sustainable living. In between is plenty of white space for one's own meditations.

The Love of a Good Woman, by Alice Munro (Knopf; $24). Accidents in Munro's latest collection reverberate with the menace of intention: in one story, a neglected grandmother chases a memory up an unknown driveway and places her daughter's children in jeopardy; in another, a child anxious about the reckless couplings of her elders puts on an old wedding dress and brushes too close to a candle. Munro's austere and magisterial stories of lust and loss are, if anything, more enigmatic than ever, and yet their opacity occasionally gestures toward something akin to hope.

East Into Upper East: Plain Tales from New York and New Delhi, by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (Counterpoint; $25). Manhattan is no less exotic than India in these fourteen stories, which note the particularities of their disparate settings—the holy woman's banyan tree, the storefront office of the East Side real-estate agent—with equal shrewdness. In both worlds, Jhabvala captures unusual domestic arrangements with a familial intimacy that makes the sudden primal turns of her plots—to sex, violence, betrayal—shocking.

Twins and What They Tell Us About Who We Are, by Lawrence Wright (Wiley; $22.95). Daphne and Barbara, genetically identical but raised separately, meet in middle age. Why do they both like their coffee black and cold? Why did they both marry men they met at sixteen at a local dance? Wright recounts the startling research on such identical twins and chronicles a few of their wary reunions. He also explores the implications of these studies, from the history of the nature/nurture debate to our assumption of individual identity.



LAURA LJUNGKVIST

The Long-Winded Lady, by Maeve Brennan (Mariner; $13). "It is not the strange or exotic ways of people that interest her," Brennan writes of her Talk of the Town sobriquet of nearly thirty years, "but the ordinary ways, when something that is familiar to her shows." By turns droll and melancholy—"There is a man around this neighborhood who is always combing his hair"—these stories document the inadvertent poignancy of the human exchange among strangers, which makes up life in the city.

Relations: New & Selected Poems, by Eamon Grennan (Graywolf; $16). Whether he is describing the flight of swifts over Dublin, the sight of his children in yellow macs climbing over cliff rocks, or his passage through "a bright bead-curtain of rain," Grennan is a writer of plainspoken reverence. The book presents fifteen years of his poetry, whose effect is like afternoon light hitting ordinary objects: it illuminates, clarifies, and directs our gaze toward what it is we love but often overlook.

Calamities of Exile, by Lawrence Weschler (Chicago; $25). The stories of the three exiles in this volume—an Iraqi intellectual, a Czech dissident, and the South African poet and painter Breyten Breytenbach—are tales of estrangement, betrayal, and, above all, resistance to totalitarianism. In Weschler's suspenseful narratives, however, the good fight quickly becomes the tangled fight as he animates moral predicaments with no easy answers.

The World of William Steig, by Lee Lorenz (Artisan; $60). From the Small Fry to Roland the Minstrel Pig, the long career of William Steig is chronicled by his former editor and fellow-cartoonist. Steig has contributed drawings and covers to this magazine since 1930; from the beginning, his eye for character, his irascible, writerly line, and his palette—"as sunny as Schubert"—have set him apart. Here, finally, is a thorough retrospective and a revealing portrait of the artist: son of Austro-Hungarian immigrants, closet utopian, exponent of Reichian psychology, and hero to readers young and old.

Annals of the Former World, by John McPhee (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $35). This monumental study of geology and geologists, in which the author crisscrosses the continent from New Jersey's Palisades Sill to California's Mussel Rock, was conceived in 1978 and assembled, piece by masterly piece, over the next twenty years. As one expert says of a beautiful, slow-growing zeolite crystal, "You don't get in a hurry and make something that nice."

The New Yorker Book of Business Cartoons, edited by Robert Mankoff (Bloomberg; $21.95). A gimlet-eyed look at the world of finance, from its triumphs and failures ("No, Thursday's out. How about never—is never good for you?") to its modest consolations ("Sweetie, show the Hazlitts the watercolors you made in jail").

## A CRITIC AT LARGE

# DANCING AND THE DARK

*The king of sequins and sleaze is still very much with us.*

### BY JOAN ACOCELLA

If, today, you go to see a dance act in a night club, it may well start with a single light trained on the stage, a single white-gloved hand jutting out, a single rear end gyrating meaningfully, and, then, as the lights go up, a pair of eyes staring at you as if to say, "I know what you're thinking." If you switch on MTV, chances are you'll see the same thing: the glove (Michael Jackson), the cold sex, the person eyeballing you as if this were all your idea. There is an imp of the perverse at loose in mass-culture dance, a spirit that has little to do with the blowsy cheer of old-time night-club numbers, not to speak of the innocent jitterbugging we used to see on television. One could say that this is just part of postmodern culture—its toughness, its knowingness. But it is also something more specific: the heritage of Bob Fosse, who was Broadway's foremost choreographer-director during the late sixties and the seventies.

That it *is* a specific style—one you can look at and say, "There's Fosse"—tells us something about the era in which this man worked. The period from the forties through the seventies was the heyday of the choreographer-directors, a group that included Agnes de Mille, Gower Champion, Jerome Robbins (above all), and Michael Bennett. These were people who believed that the meaning of a show could be contained in its dancing, and that the show could be fuelled by the energy that comes only from dancing. One by one, they changed the American musical, bending it away from its European-operetta roots. De Mille made it realistic, vernacular—fellers and gals working out their problems at clambakes. Robbins, in "West Side Story," made it urban, modern, with sneakers and social problems. Fosse made it something else altogether, no longer even a representation of life but a kind of emanation from the lower brain—edgy, unwholesome.

He had a personality to match. By the late sixties, Fosse was the kingpin of the American musical. He had a string of hits behind him, and more to come. Soon he began directing movies, and showed himself, as Pauline Kael said, a prodigy in that medium. He went into television, too, directing the wonderful "Liza with a Z," which, together with his movie "Cabaret," made Liza Minnelli a star. In 1973, he won the Oscar (for "Cabaret"), the Tony ("Pippin"), and the Emmy ("Liza") all in one sweep. He was at the top. Yet nothing could have persuaded him of this. He never learned to occupy his fame—never bought the suits, learned the tone, got comfortable. On the contrary, to the end of his career he regarded himself as an outsider, someone who'd snuck in off the street. Most days he lunched at the Carnegie Delicatessen with the playwrights Paddy Chayefsky and Herb Gardner. He would order a beer and a pastrami on white with mayo (he was a Midwesterner) and then push the sandwich away, drink the beer, and pour out his miseries. "Everything he does he thinks it comes out of bullshit," Chayefsky said. "It's a game, a phony."

But that was only half the story. The other half was that everyone else was a phony. As Fosse once said to a *Times* reporter, "I alternate between these terrible states of thinking I'm a fraud and this raging ego." He was an uncomfortable soul, and looked it: runty, slope-shouldered, with a caved-in chest. He dressed mostly in black—a style not fashionable in his time—and often had a hat pulled down over his brow. He said this was to cover his thinning hair, but it may also have been to hide his face. Out of his mouth, almost always, hung a cigarette. ("There was a sort of groove in his lip where it sat," the choreographer Donald McKayle says in Kevin Grubb's 1989 book on Fosse, "Razzle Dazzle.") In 1977, when Herb Gardner's play "Thieves" was being filmed, the director needed someone to play a street junkie. Fosse volunteered, and was perfect. In some measure, he just had to be himself.

Fosse died eleven years ago, but he is making a comeback. "Fosse: A Celebration in Song and Dance," a revue directed by Ann Reinking and Richard Maltby, Jr., will open in New York next month. Meanwhile, the revival of his 1975 musical "Chicago" is in its third year at the Shubert Theatre, and the English director Nicholas Hytner is gearing up to make a film based on the show. In these productions, unlike the MTV trickle-down, one can see Fosse's style in its pure and narrow form. The *Daily News* drama critic Howard Kissel once said that Fosse's dances reminded him of "things that crawl under a rock," but they don't always look that way. Sometimes they look like a bad dream or a George Grosz drawing. What they seldom resemble is any dancing ever made on Broadway before Fosse got there.

It is often said that Fosse's roots were in vaudeville, and this is partly true. He was born in 1927 on the North Side of Chicago. The father was a Hershey's-chocolates salesman, the mother a housewife; the family was large, normal, and Methodist. His primary dance teacher was a vaudeville aficionado, and paired the twelve-year-old Fosse with another boy in a tap act called the Riff Brothers. At first, they played "presentation houses" (movie theatres with live acts), along with Elks and American Legion meetings. Soon, however, they graduated to Chicago's strip clubs—the Silver Cloud, the Cave of the Winds—and it was that world, far seedier than vaudeville, that printed itself on Fosse's imagination. His work is strewn with low-life types: pinup girls, taxi dancers, sequinned dames flashing their thighs at men with cigars.

The strip clubs gave Fosse more than his subject; they supplied the emotional field. The strippers toyed with Fosse. They took him on their laps and licked his ears. Some probably did more with him. (He later claimed that at age fifteen he was named in a divorce suit brought against a waitress in one of the clubs.) But during the day, at Roald Amundsen

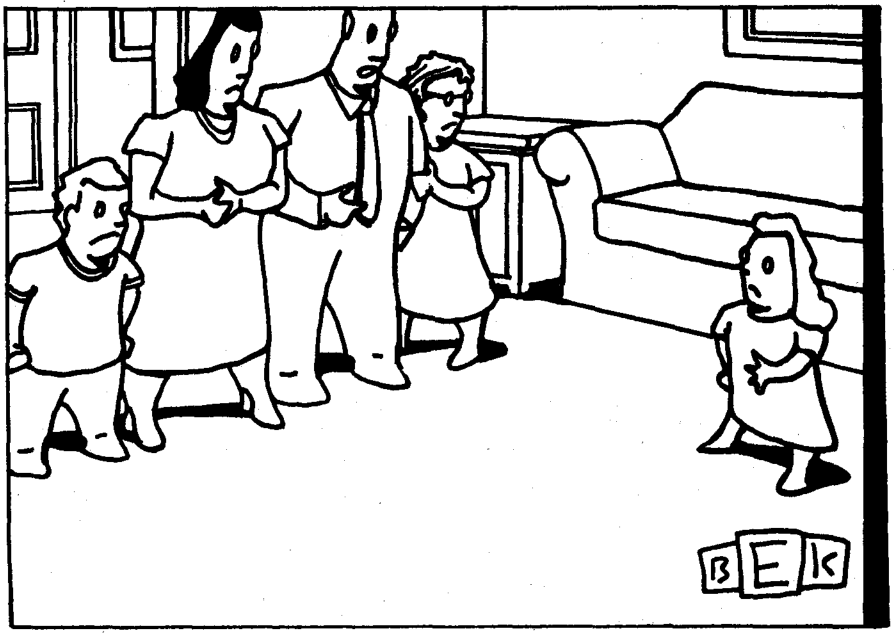
*The cast of "Fosse: A Celebration in Song and Dance," caught in the choreographer's well-oiled sex machine. The obsessive creator of Broadway's best bump-and-grind was a truth-teller in a hypocritical world. Photograph by Firooz Zahedi.*

High School, he lived the life of an innocent, clean-cut teen-ager. He played sports; he got good grades; he was voted Most Popular Boy in the class. No one at school understood how he spent his evenings. Not even his parents knew. He told them he had club dates, but he didn't say what kind of clubs.

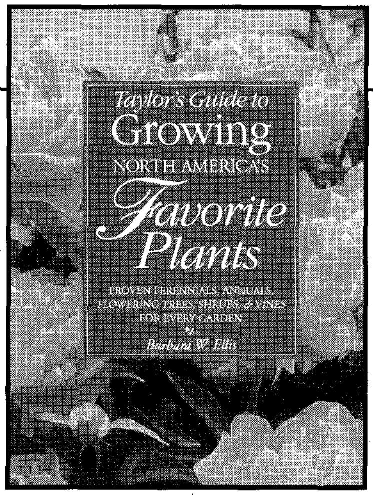
Fosse's biographer Marvin Gottfried ("All His Jazz," 1990) believes that this situation created a serious, lifelong division in the choreographer's mind, and though the theory sounds pat, Fosse's work bears it out. As it is said that he got his start in vaudeville, so it is said that the subject of his work was sex. But it wasn't really sex: it was sleaze, fraudulence—the idea of something being passed off as respectable when it is really cheesy and cheap. Sex was merely the example, the thing most likely to poke its head up from under the surface and say that the surface was false. Fosse was in psychoanalysis during the fifties, when he came of age as a choreographer. He was one of many artists in that decade—Tennessee Williams, Martha Graham, John O'Hara—who believed that beneath the Eisenhower/*Reader's Digest* world being sold to them was a censored inner world, a Real Truth, and that sex was its leading edge.

Fosse broke into show business the usual way—Broadway choruses, road shows, small parts in Hollywood musicals. (If you rent "My Sister Eileen," you will see what a wonderful dancer he was—fast, ebullient, charming.) In the 1953 film of "Kiss Me, Kate," he got a break. He was to dance in a brief duet, and Hermes Pan, the movie's choreographer, let him design it. This gave him ideas, and the actress Joan McCracken, his second wife (he went through women fast), pushed him further. She persuaded George Abbott, at that time Broadway's foremost director of musicals, to use Fosse as the choreographer for his upcoming show, "The Pajama Game" (1954). "Pajama Game" was a hit, so Abbott rehired Fosse for "Damn Yankees" the following year. Fosse had arrived, very fast.

Much of his choreography for these two lovable shows was in the wholesome Agnes de Mille mold that dominated Broadway dancing at that time. Even so, we can see Fosse's style being born. In "Pajama Game" there is a famous number, "Steam Heat," for three people who, in keeping with the song's title, look less like people than like a plumbing system. They jerk, they bob, they hiss, they clap, in perfect syncopation. Here we see the automatism, the jazz-cuckoo-clock look, that was to be so much a part of Fosse's mature work. Nevertheless, "Steam Heat" is still a human sort of dance. It's an act being put on by three amateurs—pajama-factory workers—at a union meeting. They're delighted with what they're doing; when they're applauded, they're goofily grateful. Though "Steam Heat" is about sex, it has no slyness. On the contrary,



*"Bad news—we're all out of our minds. You're going to have to be the lone healthy person in this family."*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part of the charm is seeing these factory workers dream about a hot experience that they know about only from songs on the radio.

Still, Fosse was trying to get down. For "Damn Yankees," he created an actual striptease, for a little devil named Lola who was attempting to seduce a big, dumb baseball player. The part of Lola was played by the up-and-coming star Gwen Verdon, who had been trained in Hollywood by Jack Cole, foremost maker of the erotic/exotic dances (Rita Hayworth in Greek draperies) that red-peppered the films of the forties and fifties. Through Verdon, it is often said, Fosse was influenced by Cole—emboldened to make sex dances, of which "Whatever Lola Wants," Verdon's strip, is the first example. But here, too, sex is subverted by innocence. Lola *tries* to seduce her ballplayer. She does everything that Jack Cole did: casbah, flamenco, you name it. But she tries too hard. To see her struggle out of her pedal pushers on the floor and then, with a jaunty flourish, whip them through the air like a matador's cape is to see a strip act gone badly wrong—gone comic. Verdon, with her generous figure and huge charisma, may have been Jack Cole's premier sexpot, but by the time she got to Fosse she was also a wonderful comedienne—human, fleshly, decent, with an ear-to-ear grin.

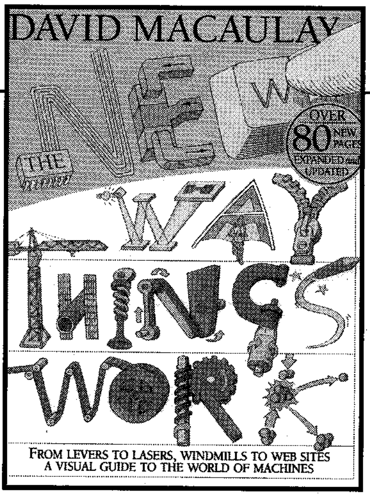
With the help of Verdon, who was by then Fosse's mistress and whom he would marry in 1960, Fosse got his first job as director-choreographer, on the 1959 musical "Redhead." (The producers needed Verdon as their star, and she insisted on Fosse as her director.) Thereafter, he would direct most of his shows and movies. At the same time, the darkness that was to affect so much of his later work began to set in. You can see it emerging in the superficially upbeat "Sweet Charity" (1966). Fosse adapted the story from Fellini's "Nights of Cabiria"—he converted Fellini's prostitute heroine into a dance-hall girl—but Fosse's Charity (Verdon again) had none of the dignity of Cabiria. She was a cheerful little fool in a heartless world, and at times Fosse seemed to side with the world. The show both started and ended with Charity's being thrown into the orchestra pit. (It was supposed to represent a pond in Central Park.) This actually looked sadistic, and to insiders who knew that the Verdon-Fosse marriage was coming apart it no doubt seemed more so.

For "Sweet Charity," Fosse created a new, harsher sex ballet, "Big Spender." It shows the women in the Fandango Ballroom, Charity's place of employment, standing behind a rail, displaying themselves to the customers. They are done up to look as cheap as possible: all spray net and fringe. They barely move. One snaps her fingers; one hooks a weary thigh over the rail. Now and then they sing, but mostly they whisper: "Hey, big spender, spend a little time with me." You sense that anyone who spent a little time with one of these women would have to go to the doctor afterward. The number is supposed to be a comedy, but it's a grim one—the Silver Cloud strippers as seen, with full terror, by the Most Popular Boy in the class.

THE grimness came, in part, from Fosse's life at that time, and before. "I'm afraid of failure," he told a TV interviewer, "afraid that the ideas I have, I don't have the talent to execute. . . . I threw up twice a day when I was a performer. Now I throw up three times a day." He had an expression, "flop sweat," for the sweat you get into when you think you've got a flop on your hands, and he had flop sweat much of the time. On occasion, according to Gottfried, it practically immobilized him. In 1960, when he was working on a show called "The Conquering Hero"—this one *was* a flop—Verdon said that he paced back and forth in their hotel room clutching a cheap Mexican statue of Jesus and screaming at it, "Why don't you help me?" Even when he had a success, he thought it was a failure. In 1973, when he won his Oscar/Tony/Emmy triple crown, he told his friends it was all a sham: "I fooled everybody."

The world was a fraud, and he was a fraud. Didn't his own work prove this? What Fosse loved best about show business, and what he did best, was the razzle-dazzle—the sequins and girls, the flash—but this was also the thing that made him feel cheap. So, as if to rise above it, to "frame" it, he made it cheaper, but this just made him feel cheaper still. When he looked at others—particularly at those who worked in ballet, a form in which he had never been trained—he felt like show-biz trash. He owed his dominance of Broadway in the seventies to the fact that Jerome Robbins had decamped to New York City Ballet to work with Balanchine. Of Robbins and Bal-

For the insatiably curious...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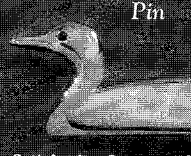

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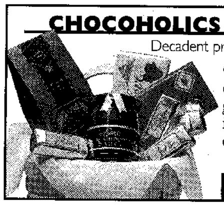
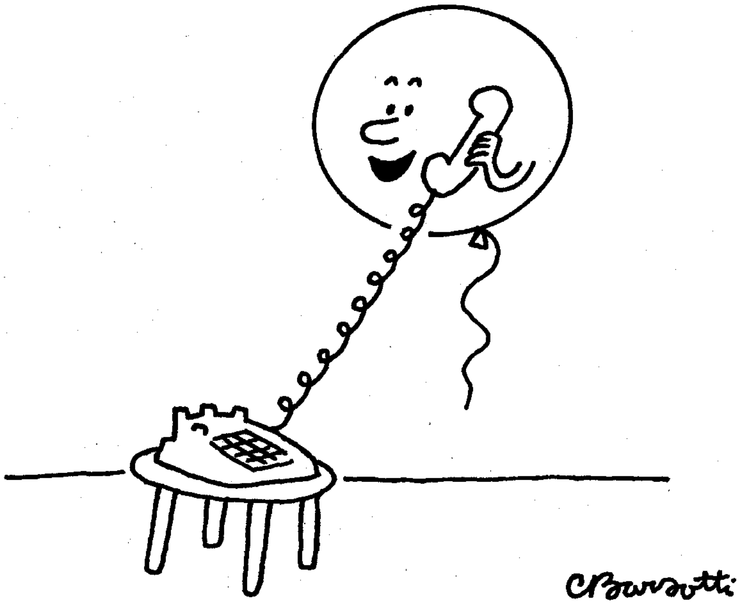




*"Hey, I'd recognize your squeaky, high-pitched voice anytime."*

anchine, Fosse said to *Rolling Stone*, "They talk to God. When I call God, he's always out to lunch."

Around 1969, he had suffered a great humiliation, with his first film-directing assignment, the movie version of "Sweet Charity." The film was a failure, and Fosse, always prone to depression, feared that he would never work again. Then, in 1971, Verdon, whom he had cheated on almost throughout the marriage, asked for a separation. He moved out, and began living very hard. He took Dexedrine to wake up and Seconal to go to sleep. He generally drank his dinner (double Margaritas). He smoked four packs of Camels a day. He also went through scores of women, often dancers in his shows, often two at a time—that is, two in bed at the same time. He had a five-year liaison with the dancer Ann Reinking, but she got the same treatment as his wives. He worked obsessively, at times hysterically. Verdon, in an interview, described him in rehearsal as a kind of monster: "His face changes. He gets ropey looking. His eyes sink into his head. . . . I've worked in insane asylums and the inmates don't look as weird as Bob." (Dexedrine no doubt did its part here.) He rehearsed dancers till they dropped, and pushed himself even further. "I had to work twice as hard as everyone else to be half as good," he said.

He hid none of his troubles. He blithely discussed his drug habits with a reporter from the *Times*. When his mother died, he told the *Post*, "I think there would have been nothing better than to have had an affair with her. I think everyone ought to have an affair with his mother." He was one of those people, often veterans of psychoanalysis, who feel that if they admit their sins they are somehow absolved of them. And why not? For—as this line of thinking goes—doesn't everyone commit the same sins? He wasn't so much a bad man as a truth-teller in a hypocritical world. In 1974, when he had a heart attack and almost died, this conviction seems to have hardened. He had gone to the edge; we hadn't. He knew the score, and he was going to tell us.

Hence the Luciferian righteousness that hangs like a low cloud over much of Fosse's later work. In the four movies that he directed after "Sweet Charity"—"Cabaret" (1972), "Lenny" (1974), "All That Jazz" (1979), and "Star 80" (1983)—the heroes are all refractions of himself: corruptees, but more honest than the world that corrupted them. In these movies, the very camerawork banners its brave candor. "Lenny" opens with a long closeup of a pair of lips. We don't know whether they are male or female, let alone whose they are. What we see is just lips: speech, sex, appetite. We have the sense that if Fosse could have gone past the lips—to the tongue, the gullet, the mucous membrane—he would have, in search of a better, wetter truth. His Broadway shows, too—"Pippin" (1972), "Chicago" (1975), "Big Deal" (1986)—all used low life as a metaphor for life. Even the 1978 "Dancin'," which had no book, got in as much raunchiness as it could. In one number, "Dream Barre," a ballet class turned into a frank scene of copulation.

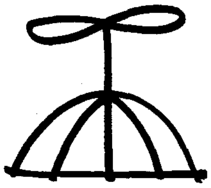
But the most interesting product of Fosse's late world view, because it is the most abstract product, was his choreographic style—a sort of ne-plus-ultra extension of the sex-oiled machine of "Big Spender." In the classic Fosse dance of the seventies, the dancers are seen in tight formation, and they don't actually move much. (As Arlene Croce once wrote, "Footwork has about as much to do with Fosse style as lariat-twirling.") The focus is on isolated gestures—a shoulder roll here, a finger splay there. The body part that gets the most action is the pelvis. It jerks, it wags, it oozes. Meanwhile, the dancers remain coldly removed. Their faces are often covered by hats. Their backs are stiff; to bend, they have to tilt. They look like mannequins, or Martians.

Furthermore, they are rarely characters in a drama. In the Broadway choreography of the fifties and sixties, the songs and dances were supposed to emerge naturally from the stage action. One minute the heroine was hanging out the wash; the next minute she was dancing. Fosse followed this rule up through the sixties, but then it started to look corny to him. So, in an interesting proto-postmodern shift, he reverted to his vaudeville roots, making dance numbers that were confessedly numbers. In much of his later work, there is little or no story to humanize the dancers, or to objectify them. We can't separate them from ourselves, can't say, "That's Laurey and Curly." They come from nowhere, or—as Fosse, with his *hypocrite-lecteur* philosophy, appears to be saying—from within ourselves.

It was in this late, dark-minded period that Fosse created some of his best work, most notably the film of "Cabaret." Just as in "Damn Yankees" he got Verdon, with her stubborn humanness, to save the strip act, so Fosse—working, it seems, against his instincts—uses Liza Minnelli to rescue "Cabaret" from what could have been its wallow in Weimar decadence. Minnelli plays Sally Bowles, an American entertainer working in a cheap Berlin night club in the thirties. Early in the movie, Sally sings

"Mein Herr," in which she tells her man that she is leaving him because it's not in her nature to be faithful, and that she means to screw her way across Europe. The staging is straight out of Fosse's late trick bag: lots of bowler hats and spread-eagled chorus girls. But if this is corruption it is seriously undermined by Minnelli's wholesomeness. She tears around the stage like a child. She waves her arms, wags her fanny, has a good time. Above all, like Verdon, she shows her body to us in a frank, happy way. In the last chorus, those big legs of hers span the stage like a suspension bridge. "Mein Herr," as it happens, *is* about corruption: Sally will indeed leave her man, she will screw her way across Europe (or at least Berlin), and, as others in the film come to oppose Nazism, she will not. She will be lost. But in Minnelli's stage manner we see the preciousness of what will be lost: innocence, fun, life. She is not the film's only saving grace. In "Cabaret," unlike other Fosse productions, evil is not a naughty little thing (sex, drugs). It is the Third Reich. Between that reality and the big, blooming girl on whom it bears down, Fosse manages to make corruption look like something more than just his personal bugbear.

"Chicago" followed soon after. Developed from the same sources as the 1942 Ginger Rogers movie "Roxie Hart," it tells the story of how Roxie, a floozie if ever there was one, parlays a murder rap (she shot her boyfriend—"He had it coming," she says) into a career in vaudeville by batting her eyelashes at the press and the jury. Most of the other characters are worse than Roxie: her lawyer, who can get anyone off for a fee; her jail warden, who can supply anything for a fee; her prison mate, Velma, a hard-as-nails babe who competes with Roxie for press coverage. In keeping with Fosse's late antirealism, the musical is staged as a vaudeville show: one after another, the characters come forward to sing their venal tales, while in the background the chorus dancers bump and grind in panties and chains.



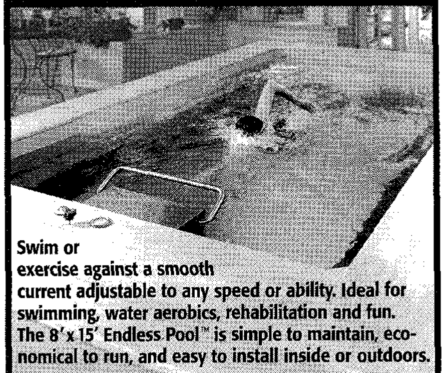
This is about as low as Fosse ever went, and it's very funny. Verdon, the original Roxie, probably made it more so. But even the revival, which first starred Ann Reinking (Roxie) and Bebe Neuwirth (Velma)—they have now been replaced by Karen Ziemba and Ute Lemper—is endearing. It doesn't leer at you; it can't. The characters are too extravagant in their vulgarity. "Chicago" was Fosse's first and last *satire* on cynicism. It may also have been his satire on himself. "Razzle Dazzle," the show's most famous number, begins:

> Give 'em the old razzle dazzle,
> Razzle dazzle 'em.
> Give 'em an act with lots of flash in it,
> And the reaction will be passionate.
> Give 'em the old hocus pocus,
> Bead and feather 'em.
> How can they see with sequins in their eyes?

In Fosse's work, corruption always needed some solid counterweight in order to work artistically. Corruption alone is a corrupting subject; it brings out our righteousness and our salaciousness and nothing much better. In order to look serious, it has to be placed against some idea of goodness. That is what Verdon brought to the shows she worked on with Fosse, and what Minnelli gave to "Cabaret." (As for "Chicago," the show actually laughs at corruption, and thus restores the balance.) Fosse clearly sensed this need. It was he who directed Minnelli, he who chose Verdon as his leading lady. But he never wholly got the lesson through his head; he just went back and forth between doing the job right and doing it wrong.

A FINE example of the latter is "All That Jazz," his embarrassing movie autobiography of 1979. The film's hero, Joe Gideon, is a famous Broadway and Hollywood director, with a life just like his creator's. (Fosse coauthored the screenplay.) The strip-club apprenticeship, the discarded wife, the drug addictions, the heart attack—it's all in there. Fosse went so far as to cast Reinking, his betrayed girlfriend, as Gideon's betrayed girlfriend. But he didn't just portray his life; he mythologized it. A beautiful angel of death, Jessica Lange, keeps turning up in Gideon's dressing room; the movie concludes with Gideon's being zipped into a body bag. Fosse may have recovered from his bypass surgery, but he was damned if he was going to end his testament that way.

Four years later, Fosse made his last movie, and in it, inexplicably, he not only cast aside the two-bit satanism of "All That Jazz"—and of so much of his



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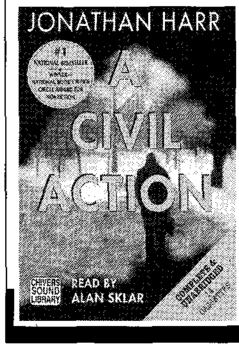

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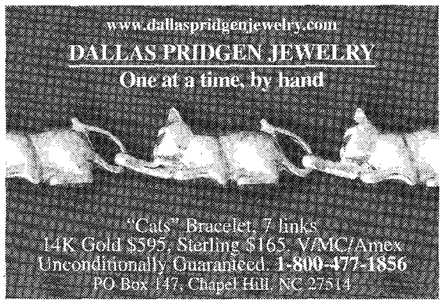

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## FALLING IN LOVE

*Tomber amoureux*. To fall in love. Does it occur suddenly or gradually? If gradually, when is the moment "already"? I would fall in love with a monkey made of rags. With a plywood squirrel. With a botanical atlas. With an oriole. With a ferret. With a marten in a picture. With the forest one sees to the right when riding in a cart to Jaszuny. With a poem by a little-known poet. With human beings whose names still move me. And always the object of love was enveloped in erotic fantasy or was submitted, as in Stendhal, to a "cristallisation," so it is frightful to think of that object as it was, naked among the naked things, and of the fairy tales about it one invents. Yes, I was often in love with something or someone. Yet falling in love is not the same as being able to love. That is something different.

—CZESLAW MILOSZ

(*Translated, from the Polish, by the author and Robert Hass.*)

work—but actually indicted it. "Star 80" is still lurid enough, God knows. It was based on the much-publicized story of Dorothy Stratten, the murdered *Playboy* playmate. Stratten was a waitress in a Vancouver Dairy Queen when a small-time hustler named Paul Snider laid eyes on her and decided she should be in *Playboy*. He got her in there and intended to push her higher, into movies, with himself as her manager. But his plan backfired: Stratten got into movies without him, and then abandoned him. "Star 80" is hard to describe, because it is so appalling. The rejected Snider blew Stratten's brains out with a shotgun; after that, he sodomized her corpse, on a special table he'd made for that purpose. In the film, the action is repeatedly intercut with shots of Snider doing this. Actually, we don't know what he's doing. All we see is his agonized, sweat-bathed, blood-smeared face. But we know, we know, that something terrible is happening. At the end, we find out what it is.

Many reviewers, and many filmgoers, were repelled by "Star 80." But it is a compelling piece of work, a portrayal of sex as utter nullity, power without meaning. All the energy in the film—imagination, hope, effort, anguish—belongs to Snider, the putative villain, and it is all aimed at a brick wall, the blank, passive Stratten (Mariel Hemingway). Here Fosse at last went beyond the idea of corruption. In this story, there is no innocence to corrupt. (According to the movie, Snider wasn't Stratten's first.) There is just ambition, with sex as its vehicle. But the most radical thing about the movie is that it takes the point of view of Snider. "I somehow identified with him," Fosse told *Rolling Stone*, "because he was trying to get in.... I know that sense of them all knowing something I don't know."

"Star 80," more than "All That Jazz," was Fosse's autobiography—the story of his insecurity, and of his fascination with sex, which, in this movie, turns to dust in his hands. When Eric Roberts, who played Snider, was having trouble with the role, Fosse instructed him to play it as Bob Fosse. Gottfried tells the story: "'Look at me,' Bob demanded. 'Look at me!' and he glared at Roberts. 'If I weren't successful...—look at me—that's Paul Snider. That's what you're playing.'" That Fosse should have seen in Snider—a pimp, a loser, a murderer—the image of himself is amazing, but he never lacked for boldness, or for self-hatred.

In 1987, at the age of sixty, he collapsed on a sidewalk (another heart attack) and died. It is hard to detect his influence in today's new musicals, for the movement he was part of has vanished. Apart from Tommy Tune, there are no choreographer-directors left on Broadway. When a show needs dances, the director calls one of a group of capable journeymen—Susan Strohman, Graciela Daniele, others—who are lively and upbeat, good at period style, and seemingly content with those virtues, as are the directors. Even leaving aside Fosse's tone, the sheer individuality of his choreography is not what is wanted now. His imprint is easier to trace in the mass

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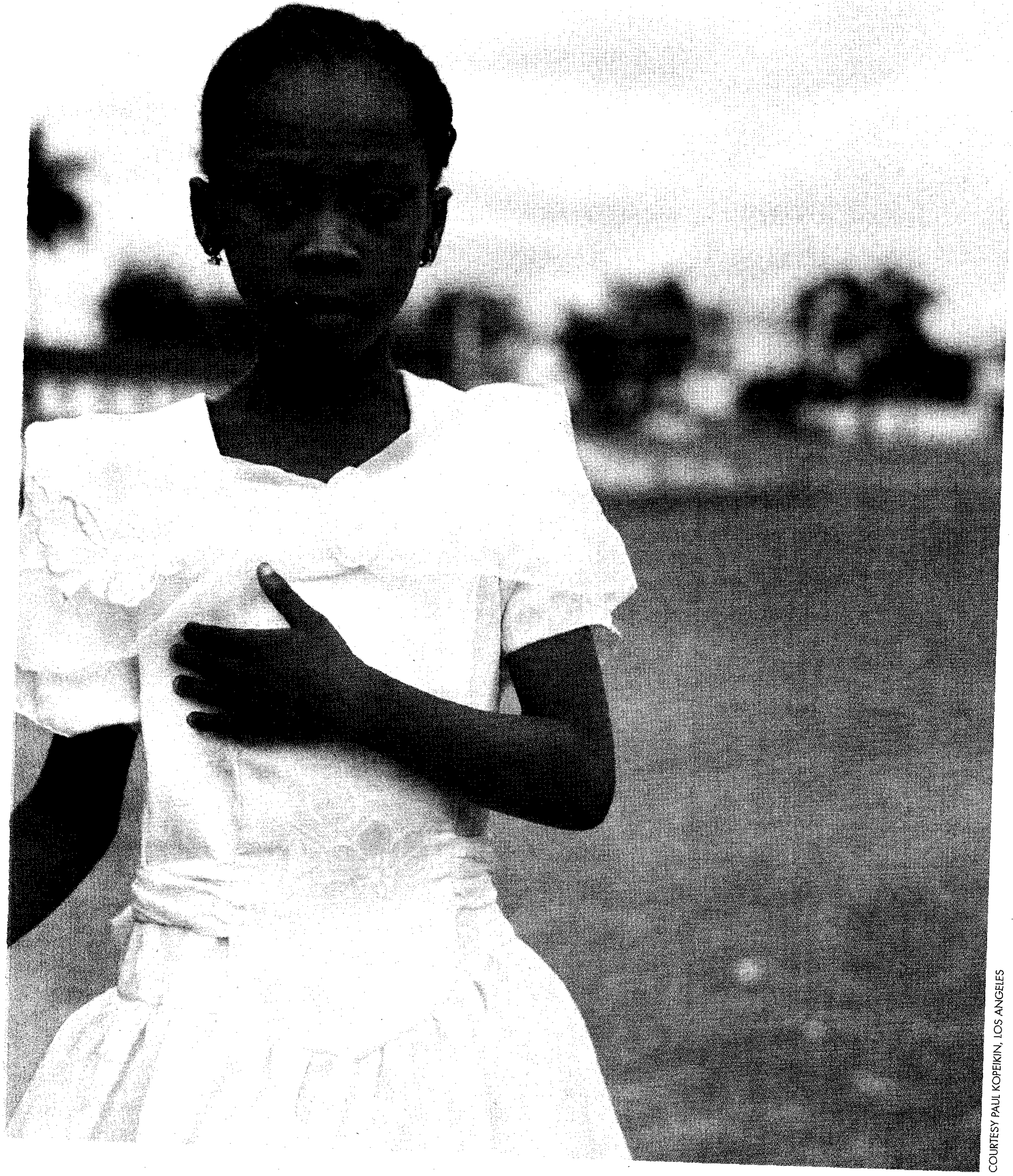
culture—in those music videos and night-club shows, and in dance movies. When in "Fame" and "Flashdance" you see the fast cutting, the isolated body parts, you are seeing the spirit of Fosse. He may have influenced advertising as well. Fashion models who look lacquered or drugged or dead—Fosse is probably in the background here.

He was better than his inheritors, or at least more ambitious. In, in, he tried to go. In "Lenny," he trained the camera on the lips; in "All That Jazz," he filmed open-heart surgery—the pump itself. (He had to get special permission from the patient.) Though his motivation often seems naïve, he was nevertheless interested in who we actually are. What is forbidden? What is true? Almost everything he did was unpleasant. His work was tacky, pushy, obsessive. He was a hophead. Yet he was a moralist, of a generation that had little hope of innocence. He was clearly drawn to innocence; its presence, or its mourned loss, is at the center of his best work. He toys with it, undermines it, reëmbraces it, pushes it away again—a struggle that at times seems oppressively personal. With all artists, we have to deal with the business of personality versus art, neurosis versus imagination. With Fosse, the imagination is smaller, the neurosis bigger. Still, he was an artist. ♦

## CONTINENTAL DRIFT

*In an essay included in Robert Lyons's latest book of photographs, "Another Africa" (Anchor), the renowned Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe faults the West's "hankering for the exotic" in its perception of Africa. Lyons himself, who has been photographing the continent since 1989, writes of trying "to counteract the constant portrayal of Africa as a place beset by famine, drought, and civil war." In their clarity, dignity, and stark simplicity, however, Lyons's photographs have an exoticism all their own. The images of ordinary Africans going about their ordinary lives—as street venders, in primary schools, in night clubs and bars, playing checkers, waiting for ferries or buses—leave the viewer with the sense of a world filled with mysteries and small wonders.*

*"Young Girl Outside Manhiya Palace," Kumasi, Ghana, 1997*



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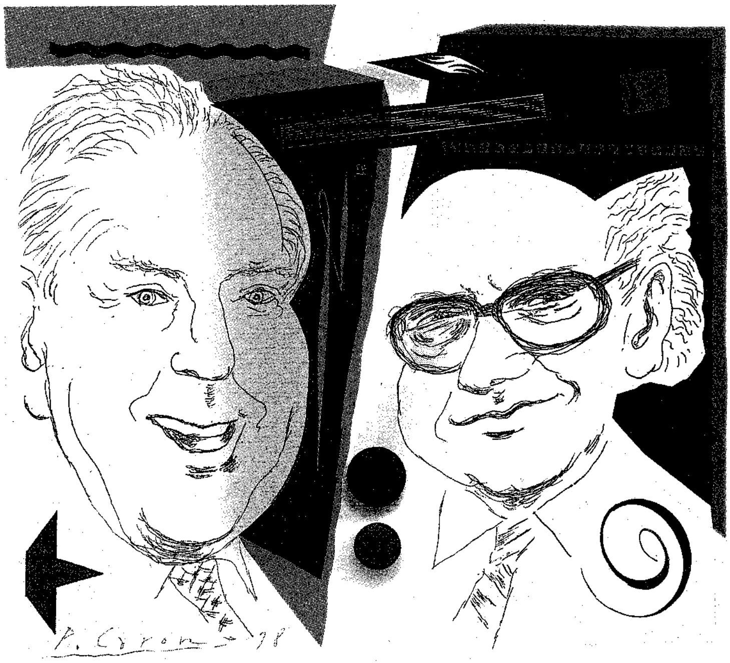
## MUSICAL EVENTS

# THE SUNSHINE BOYS

*Milton Babbitt and Elliott Carter are in their prime.*

BY ALEX ROSS

MILTON BABBITT is eighty-two; Elliott Carter is ninety. They are the unreconstructed modernists of American music, and they're still here. After all the culture wars that have raged around them—the polemics, the internecine squabbles, the countless one-night stands with listeners who cough their indifference aloud in every bar—they might have been expected to bow out. Instead, they are writing the freshest, fiercest works of their careers. Babbitt still talks a mile a minute, convulsing audiences in laughter when he speaks his mind. (At a concert in Weill Recital Hall in November, Babbitt's "Reflections for Piano and Synthesized Tape" followed Brahms's G-Minor Intermezzo; the composer got up onstage and said, "After hearing these pieces, I understand why people talk about 'the two B's.' ") His music still shuffles and shimmies like jazz from another planet.



*Carter and Babbitt: Two masters of complexity who are writing surprisingly accessible music.*

PHILIPPE CARON

Carter, meanwhile, has been working at a pace that would be hazardous for someone half his age. His ninetieth birthday, on December 11th, is an occasion not for retrospectives but for a half-dozen premières. In the last few years, he has produced the most ambitious piece of his career—the fifty-minute "Symphonia"—and in his spare moments he has written a high-minded Fifth Quartet, a mischievous Piano Quintet, and a Clarinet Concerto to which you can tap your foot. His first opera—a comedy entitled "What Next?"—will appear next year. What on earth is going on?

Babbitt, in truth, has always been an unexpectedly agreeable composer. His name is frightening to some: this is the man who once called for a "complete elimination of the public and social aspects of musical composition." Babbitt, more than anyone else, pioneered the room-clearing compositional method called total serialism, in which crucial creative choices—of pitch, rhythm, dynamics, and register—are derived from advanced set theory. By rights, anything written according to this scheme should turn out to be hideous. In hands other than Babbitt's, it often has. But Babbitt was never an ideal adherent of the ideology ascribed to him. The music turns out to be witty and pretty, in a through-the-looking-glass kind of way. For all his gruff talk, Babbitt is a merry soul, and his music reflects his personality. To find a greater disjunction between artistic means and ends, you'd have to go back to the astrological poetry of Yeats.

Babbitt is, above all, lucid. He may be dealing in abstruse relations of pitch and structure, but he doesn't make you listen to too many of them at once. His scores, like Japanese drawings, are full of empty space. Two flutes may be fluttering high up, the harp and the piano may be plucking pointillistically in the middle range, the violas may be holding one note, the cellos may be musing on a few others. The rest of the orchestra is silent, waiting its turn. Babbitt's constantly shifting dynamic markings—*pp*, *ff*, *mp*, *fff*, *p*, and so forth—look herky-jerky on the page, but in the best performances they create myriad contrasts and subtleties of tone. This rigorously organized music ends up feeling improvised, free-spirited, freewheeling. (For a fine illustration, listen to a recording of recent Babbitt piano pieces played by Martin Goldray, on the CRI label.) And the harmony is never as dissonant as the serial method ought to make it. Babbitt favors gentler, strummier combinations of tones: he likes to throw in open intervals of fourths and fifths, out-of-the-blue triads, splashes of white keys in place of chromatic clusters. Such effects have been called "tonal punning." They do the work of dissonance in eighteenth-century music—they are pranks and pricks, shocks and surprises. Before you can come to terms with them, they disappear, like half-familiar faces in a crowd.

Babbitt's Second Piano Concerto had its première on November 15th, at Carnegie Hall, with Robert Taub playing the solo part and James Levine conducting the Met Orchestra. The opening is captivating: scattered tones give way to a wealth of sustained chords and brightly sputtering piano figures. The piano seems intent on a rising minor third, and from that interval a spectrum of harmonies opens up, major and minor triads among them. The concerto picks up speed, breaks apart, thins out, and thickens again in waves. The whole central section feels like an extended improvisation, with few obvious changes of texture and mood. The piano flits between extreme upper and lower registers and comes to rest on downward-sighing, overlapping arpeggios à la Brahms. Toward the end, harmonies grow ever more lush and fin-de-siècle: there are noble ideas in the trumpet and the trombone, lonely thoughts from the violas, open-ended chords that hover around A, a few bebop shrugs to close. I heard the piece twice—at a rehearsal and in performance. The second hearing was obscured by noise in the audience and uncertainty in the orchestra. (Babbitt makes severe demands on players, especially on high strings.) Still, Levine gave the music a beautiful sheen, and Taub delivered the solo part with force and feeling. Babbitt burbles on, no end in sight.

ELLIOTT CARTER'S new pieces have caught me off guard. They are pulling me into a musical world that I thought was closed to me. Like many listeners—even a few reasonably well-informed ones—I have thought of the typical Carter work as an esoteric hootenanny of clotted chords, knotted rhythms, every-man-for-himself orchestration, and general intellectual mayhem. In the fifties and sixties, Carter was the Action painter among composers, applying notes in gummy layers. Yet it's not easy for a composer to paint one note on top of another: music is like watercolors, in that if you use too much paint everything turns brown. The summa of Carter's action style was the Piano Concerto, which was dedicated to Stravinsky and seemed to update "The Rite of Spring" to the strident marketplace of 1965. Stravinsky, in a thank-you note, acclaimed the concerto as "a masterpiece" but admitted that he was baffled by page 54. Carter, wearing a wolfish grin, was photographed in front of page 54, which has fifty strings playing fifty-odd different notes. If Stravinsky was stumped by it, what hope was there for the rest of us? When I pored over the scores, studied Carterite treatises, and rattled the

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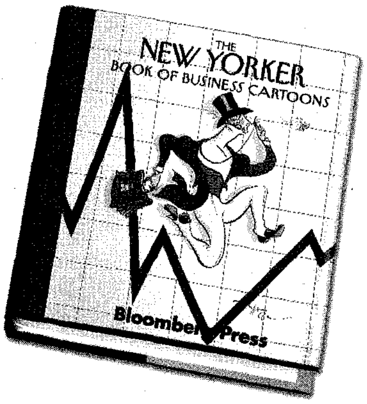
neighbors with repeated listenings to the recordings, I was able to grasp his difficult aesthetic. But when I listened in a more passive mode, I had the instinctive reaction that Carter has inspired in subscription audiences for decades: Please stop this crazy noise.

What's changed? David Schiff, in a new edition of his classic study "The Music of Elliott Carter," says that the composer has moved toward "ever-greater lucidity." He has unpacked densities of counterpoint and replaced all-over conflict with lighthearted play. It would be facile to claim that Carter has made a volte-face; he still uses the same prickly material. But he has spread his information more cleanly on the page, and the sort of things that you might have missed before jump out at you now. The Clarinet Concerto, which Stefan Asbury conducted last summer at Tanglewood, with Thomas Martin as soloist, is a marvel of clarity. The orchestra, chamber-size, is divided into groups—winds, brass, percussion, a piano-and-harp duo, and strings—and the clarinet has lively conversations with each in turn. Indeed, like an old-style bandleader, the soloist is encouraged to saunter from one group to another as he plays. The jazzy vibe rubs off on the music: for the first time since the forties, Carter has written something that's a little bit pop. There's wit in the writing, too: the clarinet, that most chameleon-like of instruments, either blends with the groups or pokes fun at them (the best example being a ludicrous duet with the tuba). A similar comedy charges the Piano Quintet, which Ursula Oppens and the Arditti Quartet introduced to New York earlier this month. The four string instruments do not engage in the furious argumentation that has marked Carter's five string quartets; instead, they tend to be of one mind, and it's the piano that misbehaves and carries on.

This lightness of tone carries over into Carter's "Allegro Scorrevole," the final movement of his gigantic "Symphonia." The whole piece has yet to be played in this country—a strange state of affairs for the most celebrated American composer of the age. It fell to the Brooklyn Philharmonic, not the New York Philharmonic, to give the "Allegro" its local première, in November. "Symphonia" has as its subtitle "*Sum fluxae pretiam spei*," which is a line from a Latin poem by Richard Crashaw meaning "I am the prize of flowing hope." The poem describes an impudent bubble that floats over the surface of things, and the "Allegro" beautifully matches the airborne theme: a lightly lunging violin line goes on for dozens of measures, not unlike the endless reveries of Indian string music, while the high winds flutter around in roughly coördinated flocks and the brass kick in with propulsive blasts. The Brooklyn performance suffered from poor string intonation—Luciano Berio's "Sinfonia" and John Adams's "Harmonielehre" filled out an ambitious program, and rehearsal time must have been limited—but Robert Spano's vigor on the podium helped the music take flight.

Boosey & Hawkes, Carter's publisher, sent me a tape of the world première of "Symphonia," which happened earlier this year under the direction of Oliver Knussen. The tape is no audiophile treasure, but it gives a sense of the sweep of the piece. (A CD will arrive next year.) The opening movement, "Partita," sways between the vibrant and the violent, and a climactic array of ambiguous Bergian chords leaves the outcome uncertain. The middle movement, "Adagio tenebroso," is a wandering funeral march, a procession of blocklike harmonies, quite unlike anything Carter has written before. There are brushes with Romantic tonality, including sequences of diminished sevenths and augmented triads. A Wagno-Mahlerian theme is tried out in the brass, but it is fulfilled only in a gruesome climax of screaming horns and scratching strings. Perhaps there is a Faustian lesson here: the music grasps at grandiose tonal illusions and is sprayed with orchestral shrapnel. (In an interview, Carter has equated regressive tendencies in twentieth-century music with Nazi kitsch.) The narrative is an intransigent one, and it is delivered with such conviction that I have gone back to earlier works, like the Piano Concerto and the Concerto for Orchestra, with new understanding. Carter has an emotional, and not just an intellectual, investment in his difficult style; he will not write music in which he does not believe. In ways good and bad, his story is a twentieth-century archetype. We can take heart from the fact that it is ending in triumph—if, indeed, it is ending. ♦

Very funny business, indeed!



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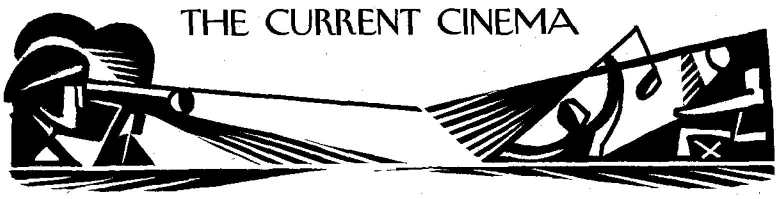


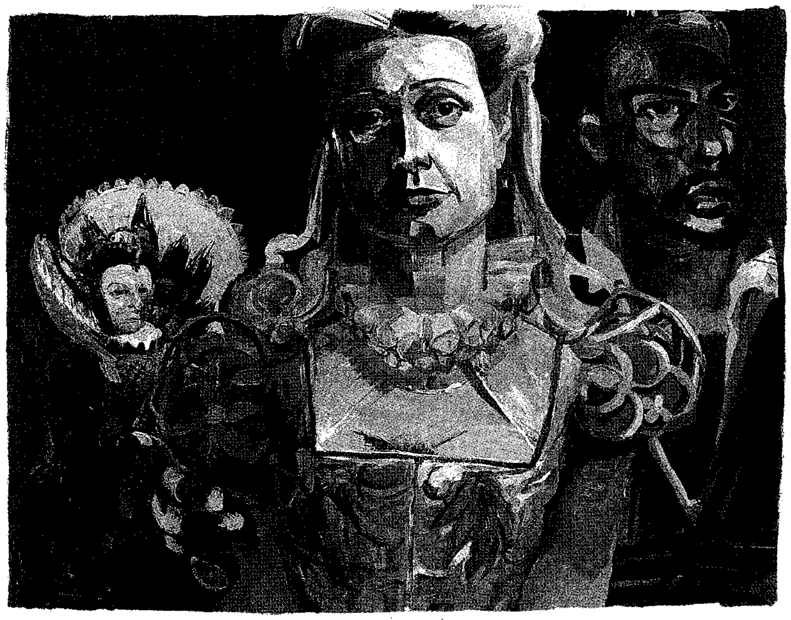
## THE CURRENT CINEMA

# WILL IN THE WEST END

*When Shakespeare was a young and randy hack.*

BY DAVID DENBY

DID ever a movie begin so badly and end so well as “Shakespeare in Love”? At first, it is low farce and barely intelligible—some palpitating nonsense about the London theatre manager Philip Henslowe (Geoffrey Rush) nearly roasted by his creditors. And then Will (Joseph Fiennes) shows up, William Shakespeare himself, who turns out to be a pretty stud with liquid eyes and ripe lips, his shirt open to the middle of his chest, his name bandied about by every strumpet in town. It is 1593, and young Will races around whory, rat-infested London and flings himself into rooms in despair. It seems that he is blocked: he cannot complete the potboiler—“Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate’s Daughter”—that he has agreed to write for Henslowe. These early scenes come at us too broadly, with unearned confidence and bumptious glee. The filmmakers—the director, John Madden, and the screenwriters, Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard—present the Elizabethan theatre as a bedlam of cutthroats and scoundrels, with plague and poverty hovering at the door. Shakespeare is just a struggling hack, jealous of the much greater Christopher Marlowe (Rupert Everett), who casually tosses his rival the story line of a play; they could be two screenwriters swapping ideas in the Warners commissary. The jokes are intentionally anachronistic—sarcastically knowing about the grubby professional routines of the theatre.



*Judi Dench, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Joseph Fiennes in a Shakespearean fantasy.*

RICCARDO VECCHIO

Anne Hathaway is home in Stratford-on-Avon with the children, and Will, despite his great renown among the ladies, is troubled in bed; he makes a weekly visit to a shrewd counsellor who looks like Shylock and gathers coin by listening to people’s problems—a Renaissance shrink, to whom Shakespeare, lying down, confesses his compositional difficulties. He speaks in Freudian slips. Writing, he says, “is like trying to pick a lock with a wet herring.” Well, this is funny enough, but I began to wonder: Were the filmmakers turning to Mel

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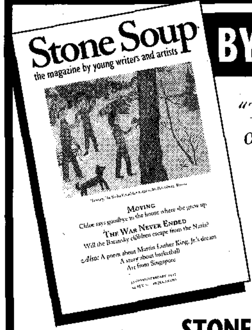

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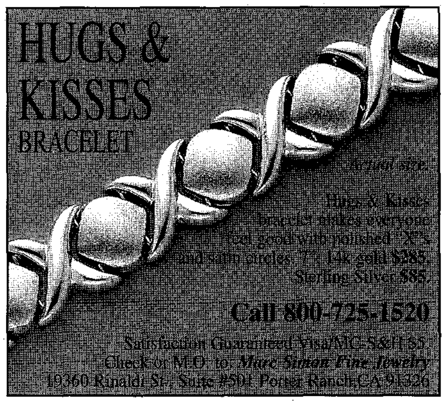

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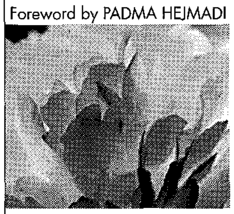

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Brooks for inspiration? Spoofing the honored great is far too easy: Kant slipping on a discarded knockwurst and discovering the categorical imperative when someone helps him to his feet—that sort of thing. Shakespeare, I thought, as much as Beethoven or Hegel, should be spared representation in the movies. Even done as comedy, it is just too embarrassing.

But "Shakespeare in Love" is more than eager to entertain us, and, heedless of my delicate scruples, it races ahead: Will is pulled out of despair when he meets the fictional Viola de Lesseps (Gwyneth Paltrow), a wealthy girl doomed to marry the unappealing impoverished aristocrat Lord Wessex (Colin Firth). Stifled and unaroused, Viola longs for a mad, passionate love affair; she wants to be an actress, too, and, since all the roles in the Elizabethan theatre are taken by men, she pastes on a little beard and mustache and presents herself at Henslowe's theatre as a young male actor eager to play the female lead in Shakespeare's new (and as yet unwritten) play. Amazingly, no one in the company of actors notices that this womanly woman is a woman. But Will does—after the "boy" kisses him passionately on the lips.

The tempo of "Shakespeare" must be double that of John Madden's last picture, "Mrs. Brown," a rather stately and weighted joint portrait of Queen Victoria and her favorite servant. This time, everyone rushes about, talking in hyperbole, except for the great Queen herself (Judi Dench), a tough-minded and witty woman who frighteningly puts people on the spot and then enjoys having the last word. Elizabeth announces her belief that love has never been portrayed truly onstage. Some of us may groan: we are set up too obviously for the disproof of the Queen's judgment.

Will and Viola fall in love, and soon, quite naked, they climb into bed. Gwyneth Paltrow, her breasts earlier lifted and flattened but now restored to proper sway, and Joe Fiennes, who may not be all that good-looking but acts as if he were, make love handsomely while speaking to each other in near-poetry, some of which sounds very familiar. And at that point I stopped fighting "Shakespeare in Love," which, as you may have gathered, is a fantasia about the composition of the world's most famous love story. The filmmakers proceed from the philistine but undeniably useful idea that Shakespeare could not have simply imagined an overpowering and tragic love, that he must have experienced it, and that what happened between him and Viola in bed and in conversation shaped "Romeo and Juliet." (Actually, Shakespeare lifted the plot from a well-known poem, which was based on Italian and French prose versions.) The movie presumes a great deal, but when these two poeticizing lovers get into bed the parasitic cleverness develops its own life and fire, and "Shakespeare in Love" turns into an exciting literary-erotic entertainment. Retrospectively, some of the earlier noise and bustle makes sense; the thick-textured jabber heard on the streets and in the theatres and taverns is the ground of Shakespeare's poetry. Madden pulls together poetry and act; he's made a true crowd-pleaser. The golden-tressed Gwyneth Paltrow is a little too bland for my taste, especially when she recites from the play, but Joseph Fiennes has a good voice and a volatile presence. Short and saucer-eyed, he may not be right for tragedy, but he's a natural for romantic farce.

The American screenwriter Marc Norman, acting on a suggestion from his son, wrote an early version of the script, but then Tom Stoppard stepped in, and in truth the movie seems largely Stoppardian in invention. In Stoppard's famous philosophical comedy "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead," Hamlet's two college buddies, summoned to Elsinore, remain stranded at the edges of a great intrigue that they never understand. In "The Real Inspector Hound," two drama critics in attendance at an Agatha Christie-type play wind up in the midst of the action onstage. Like Shakespeare himself, Stoppard is not very good at creating plots: he needs some sort of prior text or famous figure on which, incubus-like, he can feast, and whose body he can then take over. In this movie he creates a fiction around the composition of "Romeo"—complete with disguises, misunderstandings, and abrupt reversals—that is itself Shakespearean. Only, this time Stoppard's incubus delivers the original text intact.

When Madden stages the opening night of "Romeo and Juliet," the shenanigans come to a halt, and "Shakespeare in Love" turns ardent and celebratory. There is an extremely touching moment when Henslowe's tailor, assigned to speak the prologue, walks out onto the stage, faces the mass of suddenly silent people, stutters, gags, and then, recovering at last, delivers the speech with resounding magnificence. It is a dream of a first night. The swordplay produces gasps, the death of Juliet leaves everyone in tears. We get the point: Christopher Marlowe, having been killed in a tavern brawl, is gone; a new, intimate, but explosive tragic style has been born. Shakespeare is the beginning not only of modern dramatic literature but of popular culture, too, with its immediate pleasures and brazen excitements. Shakespeare leads to the movies—to the movie that we are watching. The presumption, in the end, is earned: "Shakespeare in Love" delivers. The playwright himself doesn't realize what he is to become, but the Queen does, and the best moments at the end are left to Judi Dench, who tops her Victoria with this brief appearance as Elizabeth. Dench speaks her arrogant lines with such easy mastery that at least one modern audience sighed with pleasure.

As a figure in a movie, Martin Cahill, the hero of John Boorman's "The General," is something of a scandal. Cahill was a real-life Dublin thief and gang leader (he died in 1994), and, in the person of the great Irish actor Brendan Gleeson, he is surely the least glamorous gangster hero in motion-picture history. Gleeson has a thick, heavy neck, a massive forehead and jowls, and a large doughy body. Moving along Dublin's streets and alleys with his hood pulled over his head, he might be an animated potato sack or perhaps some round, disconsolate creature—a hedgehog or a beaver—raptly concentrating on the terrain before him. Cahill is in fact a criminal genius and a fantastically aggressive personality, and his lack of obvious panache amounts to an enormous exercise of irony. He always defeats the expectations people have of him (even in death). So does the movie. "The General," John Boorman's best picture since "Hope and Glory," is a hipster's gangster movie—a compound of gaiety and melancholy, and so smart and deadpan funny that some people, waiting for conventional thrills that never arrive, may miss the point. "The General" is for those who like their pleasures perversely cool, their epiphanies conveyed by a glance or a smile. ♦

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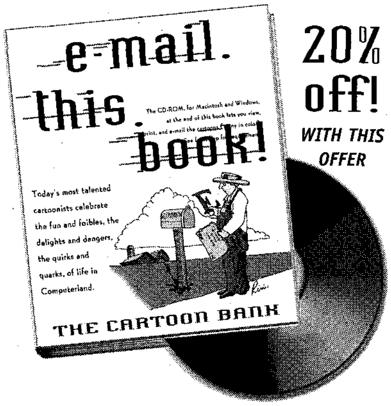
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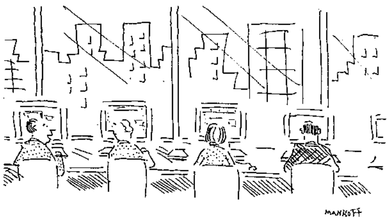

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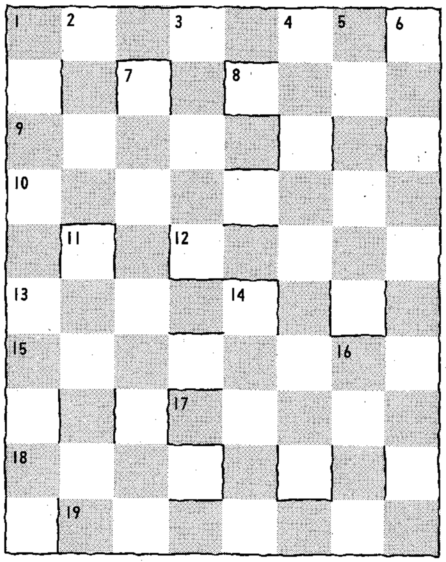

### ACROSS

1 Dogs accepting few restrictions (7)
8 I'm thrilled revolver's left unfinished (4)
9 They crush "Lawrence of Arabia" (the novel) (5)
10 Film industry worker has turned in small container (8)
12 Relative mentioned city burned by the Saracens (5)
13 Zodiac sign changes after the first (5)
15 It's used as a lubricant, since oil is no good (8)
17 Mom's adorning a kind of jar (5)
18 If not eels, bats (4)
19 Admires Italian family at German spa (7)

### DOWN

1 Wearing swords, children initially played hooky (3,7)
2 Pasture always stores fertilizer (4)
3 Have friends finish in Paris holding it (3,2)
4 House of York emblem otherwise contrived (5,4)
5 Choose part of this electromagnet (6)
6 Republican dislikes draws (10)
7 In need of cash, writes about Frasier's brother (9)
11 Part of harness left in newlywed's hands? (6)
14 Balance plate (5)
16 Standard Agatha Christie mystery (4)

• •

*The solution to puzzle No. 69 appears on page 107. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.*

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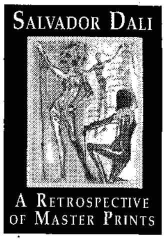

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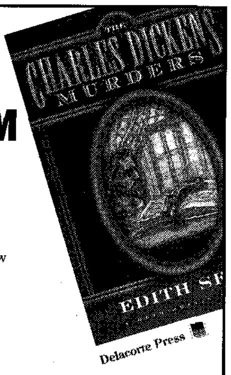

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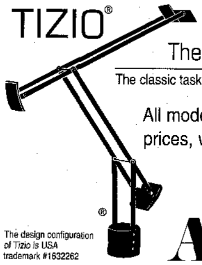

The design configuration of Tizio is USA trademark #1632262

HUMMINGBIRD
(pin or earrings)

Sterling $29
14K Gold $125
14K Gold $161
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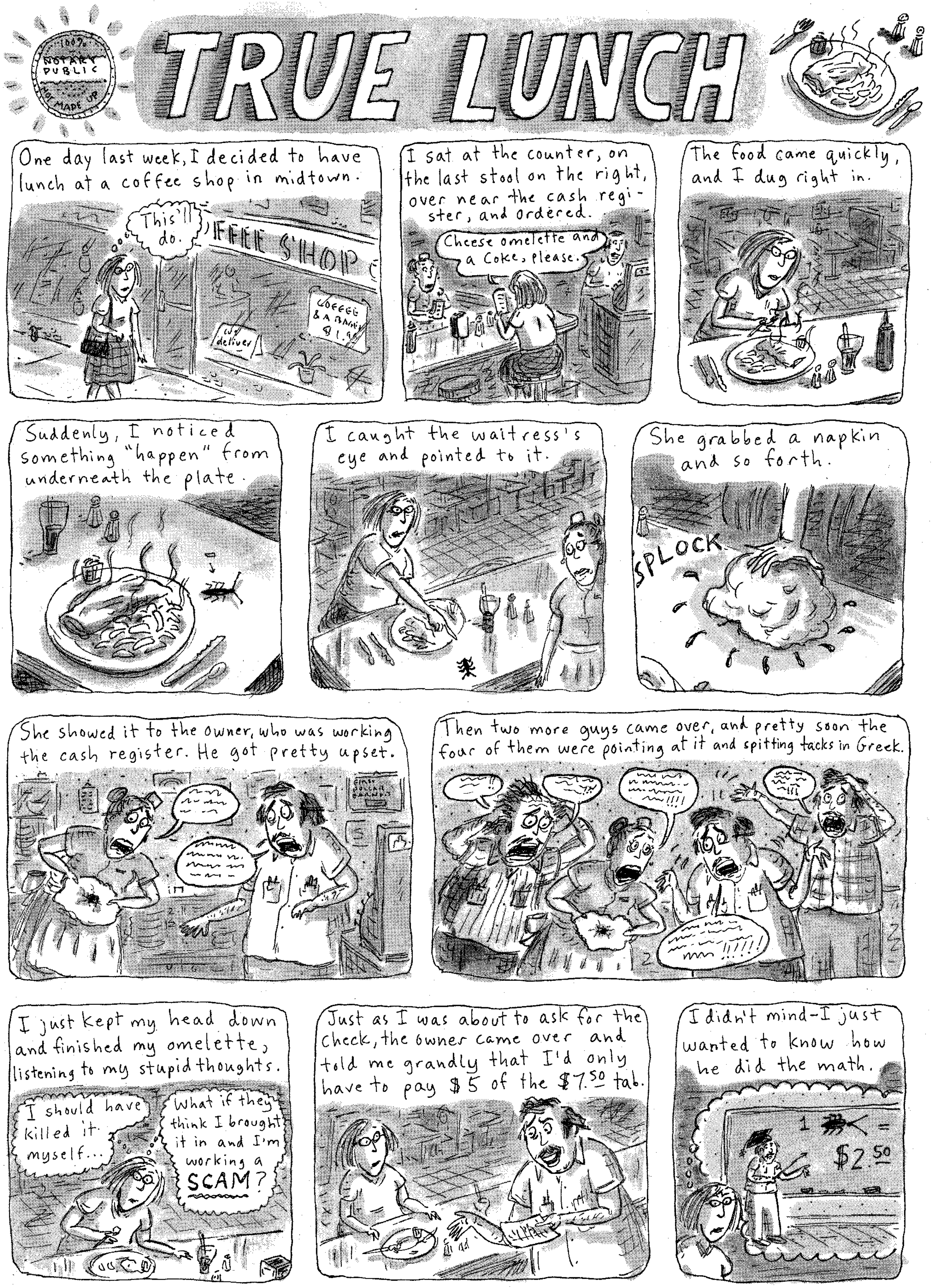
* SOURCE: FALL 1997 SIMMONS

# THE BACK PAGE

BY ROZ CHAST


100% NOTARY PUBLIC NOT MADE UP
TRUE LUNCH
One day last week, I decided to have lunch at a coffee shop in midtown.
This'll do.
FFEE SHOP
We deliver
COFFEE & A DANISH $1.9
I sat at the counter, on the last stool on the right, over near the cash register, and ordered.
Cheese omelette and a Coke, please.
The food came quickly, and I dug right in.
Suddenly, I noticed something "happen" from underneath the plate.
I caught the waitress's eye and pointed to it.
She grabbed a napkin and so forth.
SPLOCK
She showed it to the owner, who was working the cash register. He got pretty upset.
Then two more guys came over, and pretty soon the four of them were pointing at it and spitting tacks in Greek.
!!!!
!!!
!!!!!
I just kept my head down and finished my omelette, listening to my stupid thoughts.
I should have killed it myself...
What if they think I brought it in and I'm working a SCAM?
Just as I was about to ask for the check, the owner came over and told me grandly that I'd only have to pay $5 of the $7.50 tab.
I didn't mind—I just wanted to know how he did the math.
1 = $2.50

THANKS TO PHILLIPS, WEARY TRAVELERS WILL ALWAYS HAVE A PLACE TO STOP AND REFUEL.

By donating a former plant site to the Cactus Playa Lake Project, Phillips Petroleum helped expand and protect the habitat of hundreds of thousands of migratory birds. The project resulted from the cooperative effort of Phillips, wildlife and conservation agencies and the community of Cactus, Texas. Now bald eagles, waterfowl and dozens of other bird species have a better place to rest along the Central Flyway. It's yet another example of what it means to be The Performance Company.

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